

**MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD REMOTELY
ON 1ST. NOVEMBER 2021**

Present: Cllr. R Mills (Mayor)
Cllrs A Farina-Childs, G James & G Edwards

Also present P.C. Adam Lang

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllrs. A Davies, D Davies, P Cook, Z Hammond, T Evans & A Short & Ms. D Box

At the appointed start time, the meeting was inquorate, but it was agreed we continue on an informal basis, as Cllr. C Erasmus had indicated to the Clerk earlier that she would join the meeting as soon as her Governors meeting allowed, and Cllr. M Gwynne had also indicated he would be attending (and had encountered technical issues previously).

Until such time as the meeting becomes quorate, no decisions can be taken, and any business not transacted must be transacted at the next meeting

2. Declarations of Interest

No requests for Declarations were necessary at this point as no decisions could be take

3. Police Report

The Mayor welcomed PC Adam Lang to the meeting and apologised for the poor attendance.

PC Lang apologised for not having a prepared report, but indicated he was willing to answer any queries members might have.

He started, however, by updating members on the numerous incidents of anti social behaviour in and around town, namely the Bus Station, High Street, Grove Park, Showfield , Welfare & Mc Donalds.

There were issues regarding drug use by adults, and youngsters were causing problems outside Yummies, where 13 troublemakers names were taken. Similar disturbances were reported at Mc Donalds.

A Community Protection Notice was issued in respect of one continual offender, who has since been sectioned and Cornerstone are working with a homeless individual to try and find him a home.

PC Lang stated that the Police were grateful for the assistance given by the public and County Borough & Town Councillors and highlighted that one of their greatest assets was information gained from CCTV cameras. Unfortunately, they were encountering some issues in so much that the Borough system did not seem completely compatible with the Police NICE system and were hoping these problems could be solved in the near future. The Clerk offered to write to the Borough asking this be treated as a matter of some urgency, given the numerous ongoing ASB incidents in town.

PC Lang welcomed any assistance that could move this issue forward.

He appreciated the frustration members had regarding ASB and invited members to attend the regular online Caerphilly Team meetings held with partner agencies and other interested parties, and stated he was willing to attend Town Council meetings on a regular basis if members wished, ideally with us identifying any specific areas we wished to discuss.

Cllr. M Gwynne (who had joined the meeting) passed on thanks from several residents to the swift response to the recent problems with youths at Mc Donalds, whilst also highlighting the area around Blackwood Methodist Church as another potential problem area, with large numbers of youths congregating there on a fairly regular basis.

The Clerk asked PC Lang if the recent damage to the defibrillator outside the Maxime had been reported to the police, and that he had contacted the Manager of the Cinema to check for any CCTV coverage. Cllr. A Farina-Childs stated he had reported the incident.

PC Lang stated he was personally unaware, but would check when he returned to the station.

The Mayor thanked the officer for his attendance and he left the meeting.

Cllr. M Gwynne joined the meeting at 6.50pm & Cllr C Erasmus at 7.00pm making the meeting quorate at that point

Now the Meeting was deemed quorate, the Mayor asked for any Declarations of Interest.

Cllrs. A Farina-Childs & G James declared an interest in item 12 Civic Awards, both being fellow Governors with Mrs Linda Price at Blackwood Comprehensive School

4. County Borough Report

Cllr. A Farina-Childs gave a brief report on current issues.

He reiterated the ongoing anti social behaviour problems encountered around the area, as previously highlighted in the Police report – in town, at Grove Park and the Welfare Ground, and thanked the police/ community support officers for their continued support and assistance.

Homelessness appeared to be on the increase again, and he reported that he had contacted Cornerstone to see if they could be of assistance.

He also reported that he and fellow County members had been contacted by numerous residents regarding the ongoing drainage issues at Cwmgelli

5. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor reported that he had helped judge the Best Dresses Window Competition as part of the Turn The Town Pink event, and had been encouraged and impressed by the efforts made by businesses in the town. He had also, together with Emma Wilkns (Aneurin Bevan UHB) and Beverley Edwards presented the prize money to the two worthy winners – Candour Talent & Growing Spaces.

The Clerk reported that following the Mayors request to make joint winners of the competition, both to receive £50, he had emailed members and received support from those who had responded but now requested formal agreement of the additional £50 prize money, and this was given unanimously.

The Mayor also reported that he together with Cllrs. A Farina-Childs & G James had erected the Poppies on the lamp posts throughout the High Street

6. 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

Footfall information – forwarded to members

Consultation on 21st. Century Schools – Proposal to create a Pupil Referral Unit for vulnerable pupils on former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School site – forwarded to members

Notification of support to organisers of Remembrance Parades & Poppy Road Markings

Off Street Parking Order Amendment to allow E taxis to use bays in Car parks

Notification of meeting with CCBC officers and Cabinet Member to discuss issues raised by Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association and County Cllr.K Etheridge re Bus Station toilets and other related issues

Notification that ownership of domain www.blackwoodtowncouncil.org.uk was due for renewal and requesting permission to proceed

Copy of Winter Service Plan – forwarded to members

Autumn/ Winter Weed Control – forwarded to members

Notification of Temporary Road Closure of A4048 between Roundabout at High Street & B4251 from Monday 8th. November - forwarded to members

Open letter from the Leader in relation to Covid - forwarded to members

Notification of rescheduled Chartist Bridge Multi Agency Meeting being held at 9.00 am on 28th. October via Microsoft Teams

Aneurin Bevan UHB Covid Updates – forwarded to members

Information on Mobile Testing Units

Notification of NHS Pressures Facebook Live Q & A on Wed 3rd. November

One Voice Wales Remote Training sessions –forwarded to members

Research into role & remuneration of Cllrs. in Wales – forwarded to members

Model Local Resolution Protocol – forwarded to members – Agenda for next meeting

Studio 54

Notification of Mini Event to coincide with Xmas Lights switch on in town - 4.00pm Saturday 27th. November

Town & Community Councils Liaison C'ttee Notification of Meeting to be held 20th. October

Invoice for Membership subscription £100

Cty.Cllr. K Etheridge/
Cllr. G Edwards Copy of various correspondence to police/ CCBC regarding anti social behaviour in town – many forwarded to members

Welsh Audit Press Release identified unlawful activity & failure to exercise minimum standards of financial management & governance in several community councils, so much so that a Community Clerk made illegitimate payments to herself of £116k over 4 years

7. *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 – October	928.93
Playworks	Fee – September	20.00
HMRC	Tax/ N.I. - October	290.96
J V Graphics	Replacement Poppies (Incl. £34 VAT)	204.00
T&C.C's Liaison	Subscription/Admin Fee	100.00

8. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 4th. October 2021*

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

9. *Matters Arising*

The Clerk reported on the following matters

Meeting with CCBC Officers regarding issues highlighted in letter from Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association at the Bus Station.

After a full and frank discussion, chaired by Cllr. Jamie Pritchard, the outcome was that by mid November Officers would report back with progress on the following –

- Request to Stagecoach regarding potential use of the attendants Office, currently under used
- Anti Social behaviour incidents at the Interchange
- Cleansing of the Bus Station – litter bins overflowing in waiting area
- Consideration of Lighting being switched off after midnight
- A written agreement regarding partnership working and communication between both parties
- Taxi Association & Stagecoach consider working together in securing the Bus Station in the evenings

Christmas Activities

At the last meeting Members were conscious that the cancellation of planned events 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.

Having made contact with Blackwood Primary & Libanus Schools Headteachers (who were delighted with the proposals) he had identified 418 & 355 children respectively are on the School registers.

Furthermore, he estimated that the number of residents at the establishments identified totalled approximately 85-90

Members were requested to identify a budget they wish to spend per child/ per resident and suggested part/all of the budget currently set aside for Christmas Activities – Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert & Market/Fair £2,750 be vired for this purpose.

After some discussion, it was ***unanimously agreed*** a maximum of £2.50 per child be agreed for selection boxes and £4 per resident for sweets/ chocolates.

Cllr. A Farina-Childs suggested that perhaps we check with the schools to regarding potential lactose intolerant children, and seek to find suitable alternatives if necessary

Skate Board Park

After discussion at the last meeting 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.

The following response had been received

Good Afternoon Mr Hold,

Thank you very much for your recent e-mail regarding the above.

I can confirm that Lynne John, the Officer co-ordinating this project (who you have copied into this e-mail) will make contact with you together with County Borough Ward Members, as the project develops.

Take Care.

Kind Regards,

Cllr Lisa Phipps

Aelod Cabinet dros Dai | Cabinet Member For Housing

Members welcomed the positive response and looked forward to further consultation on the project

10. To Receive the Notes of a meeting between Town Council Representatives & British Legion Representatives regarding ongoing maintenance of Commemorative Garden held on 15th. October 2021

PRESENT : Mayor Rhys Mills

Town Cllrs. Andrew Farina-Childs, Andrew Short & Trefor Evans, and the Chair Mike Herbert (Chair), Bill Baber (Vice Chair), Andrew Doody (Secretary) & D.Davies representing the Blackwood Branch British Legion.

Apologies were received from Town Cllrs. Zoe Hammond & late apologies from Cllr. George Edwards

The Mayor thanked those present for their attendance, and explained the purpose of the meeting was to resolve the ongoing issue of responsibility for maintenance of the Garden, which was in a poor looking state at present.

The history of the project was raised first with Town Council's understanding this was a joint project with the Legion expected to contribute to the project itself and maintenance thereof.

The British Legion representatives highlighted that their current rules did not allow them to utilise money raised from charity collections for such purposes, but the Vice Chairman did propose contacting local businesses to perhaps sponsor the upkeep. They also commended the work by Cllr. Short over the past years.

However, after some further discussion Town Councillor representatives present all felt we needed to move forward, and that we couldn't change what had happened in the past.

Given that viewpoint, Cllr. Andrew Short offered to tidy up the area again over the coming week or so and plant where appropriate. Cllr. Rhys Mills offered to assist.

British Legion Secretary offered to make contact with firm that might be able to assist in re-defining the red poppy emblem.

With regards the future, the Mayor proposed he make contact with the local ATC/ Army Cadets to enquire whether they may be able to assist in maintaining the site (as part of their training/ badge collection) 3 or 4 times a year.

Chair of Legion queried whether local Scouts/ Schools might be approached.

Everyone present thought this approach of inviting community assistance from youth and other groups to be really worthwhile.

The Mayor also proposed that perhaps planting of the site could be arranged with the Nurseries who provide the hanging baskets, and funded via the budget already set aside for maintenance of the site. This was unanimously supported by Town Councillors and the Mayor will propose same at the next Meeting.

During discussion on this issue, Cllr. A Farina-Childs fully supported the initiative to get the ATC and Army Cadets involved, and had received positive feedback from both organisations.

The Mayor formally proposed that planting of the site be arranged, potentially with the Nurseries mentioned above, and that maintenance of the site be funded via the current budget.

This was *unanimously agreed* by all members.

Cllr. G James suggested that after this years Remembrance Services consideration be given to re-visit the poppy emblem with a view to making same more low maintenance. This was also **agreed** by members

11. Budget Monitoring Report to Period 6 – 30th. September 2021

The Clerk presented his Monitoring Report, and informed members little had changed since his previous report to 31st July 2021, other than with no Scheduled Summer /Autumn Event, the cancelled Blackwood RFC Firework Display (both budgeted at £1,000) and the actual final account for Hanging Baskets (a saving of £204) the surplus for the year increases by £2,204 which results in an anticipated Surplus of £18,709

It was **agreed** the report be accepted

12. Civic Awards - Nominations

The following nominations have been received

Mrs Linda Price for a Civic Award in recognition for her services to the Community.

Linda has been a Governor at Blackwood Comprehensive School for over 25 Years and is also a very long standing member of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. Beyond just being a member, over the years she has undertaken a number of significant leadership roles including as Sunday school teacher, Girls' Brigade Officer and, perhaps most notably, as the long-serving Church Treasurer - a key role within the leadership of the church.

In all these roles, Linda's willingness to freely offer her time and skills has meant that many people in and beyond the life of Mount Pleasant have been encouraged and enabled to flourish in their own lives.

Her Christian commitment is unwavering, her service through Mount Pleasant is extensive, and the time and effort that she has willingly offered is appreciated by many in Blackwood

Jaxon Darknell for a Young Persons Award.

This young lad rode a mile on his bike every day in May raising money for Velindre.

In all winds and weathers, he remained stalwart and determined to raise funds for Velindre, as his mother Karen has had breast cancer. He raised in excess of £1,000 and Velindre appointed him a Young Ambassador for the centre. He is a very kind caring child and everyone is proud of his efforts

Both Nominations were considered worthy of the Awards, but with Cllrs. A Farina- Childs & James having declared an Interest, and therefore unable to vote, it was **agreed** to defer until the next meeting

13. Independent Remuneration Panel For Wales Draft Report – Representations by 26th. Nov. 2021

The Clerk presented his report, which highlighted that part of the Draft Report which concentrated on Town & Community Councils.

He indicated that the proposals, which are similar to the current allowances, apart from the introduction of a proposal to include an optional attendance allowance of up to £30, would come into effect after the Elections next May, Councils should consider the determinations for the next financial year and use this to inform budget plans.

Members felt any decisions should rest with the new Council, but that as suggested the proposed determinations are considered at budget setting.

14. Planning Applications

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

Case Ref. 21/0899/FULL

Location: Land At Gelli Farm Tredegar Road Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1BZ

Proposal: Create surface water drainage system to serve approved residential development reference numbers 18/1059/NCC and 19/1024/RM

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

Case Ref. 21/0923/TPO

Location: 2 Cilgerran Way Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1GF

Proposal: Reduce crown by 3m and carry out other works on tree T37 (Tree Preservation Order 2/82/IBC)

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

Case Ref. 21/1029/NCC

Location: 30 Clos Coed Bach Blackwood NP12 1GT

Proposal: Remove condition 06 (Garages) of planning consent P/98/0147 (Erect 99 dwellings and associated garages roads and sewers) for 30 Clos Coed Bach only and convert existing garage into a garden room/store room and provide one extra car parking space

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

Case Ref. 21/1026/COU

Location: Unit A Highfields Way Blackwood NP12 1SL

Proposal: Change the use of a redundant takeaway to a vet's practice and install 6 no. air cond. units

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

After some discussion, it was ***agreed*** there was nothing too contentious and no objections be raised

15. Reports

The Clerk reported that he had been contacted by Blackwood Rotary Club who are celebrating their 75th. Anniversary this year with a significantly scaled down Celebration Dinner at the Maes Manor, and wondered would Town Council consider a £10 donation for mention of Sponsorship on their Programme or the Event.

This was *agreed* by members

He also reported that Beverley Edwards had written a Thank you note to all businesses that had participated in the Turn the Town Pink Celebrations and asked if this letter and photographs of presentations could be posted on the Town Council website. This was *unanimously agreed*

Cllr. Gerwyn James presented a Petition from 280 residents, organised by Ms Donna Jones – We the undersigned residents request a children’s park be established at the Plas Mawr Field Blackwood near the Community Centre, to help with play and children’s well being as a Leisure Facility. - We ask that funding is considered from the Town & County Council with a proportion considered from the fund established for our Councillors in the Ward

The play area will consist of swings, roundabout, slide and other equipment for young nursery and primary school children but to include older children too.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE THERE TO BE EQUIPMENT FOR DISABLED CHILDREN, FOR THEM TO HAVE ENJOYMENT AT THE PARK.

Also a suitable football field for the children.

All amenities for children aged 0-16 years.

We do not envisage any play area will take up the whole of the field and the area would be fenced off so dogs can be walked.

The Petition, which will also be presented to Caerphilly C.B.C., was received by Town Council, and would be considered in more detail together with any other schemes received at a future meeting

Cllr. G Edwards reported that he had received a response from the Bedwelty Agricultural Society stating that their meeting had unanimously agreed they had no appetite to move the Show from its current site at Llancaeach Fawr

Cllr. M Gwynne reported that he had received a number of requests that more information be made available regarding Blackwood’s involvement in the Chartist Movement. The Clerk suggested perhaps an approach be made to Caerphilly C.B.C. regarding including same on the Notice Boards around town, and members agreed this suggestion.

Cllr. G James requested that consideration be given to approaching Caerphilly C.B.C. to see if Town Council could take over ownership/ responsibility for the benches situated just north of the Library, with a view to possible renewal/replacement dedicating one to Past Mayors of Town Council. Members were unanimous that an approach be made.