

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL  
HELD ON 16<sup>TH</sup>. MAY 2022**

**Present :** Councillors Donna Box, Delwyn Davies, Gerwyn James, George Edwards, Louise Phillips, Andrew Short, Carol Erasmus, Arthur Bradfield, Kevin Jones & Pat Cook

Councillor Steve Brookman, having attended and signed his Acceptance Of Office unfortunately had to leave having received an emergency.

Also present County Cllr. Kevin Etheridge

**1. To Appoint a Chair until Item 5 is concluded**

It was proposed and seconded and agreed by all present that Cllr. G James Chair the meeting in the interim

**2. Elections – Acceptance of Office**

The Clerk reported that all members present had signed the Acceptance of Office Forms in his presence as required

**3. To Receive Apologies for Absence**

Cllr S Brookman tendered his apologies prior to the start of the meeting having received an urgent telephone call.

Cllr. R Williams had also written to the Clerk saying he would not be attending the A.G.M. and tendering his resignation as member for Cefn Fforest East.

**4. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr. G Edwards declared an Interest in Item 15 Applications for Financial Assistance as Chair of the Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association

**5. To Elect a Mayor**

It was proposed by Cllr. D Davies & seconded by Cllr. L Phillips that Cllr. G Edwards be elected Mayor and this was agreed by all present.

Cllr. Edwards thanked members for the honour bestowed upon him and vowed to work hard for the town and its residents.

**6. To Elect a Deputy Mayor**

With no nominations from the floor, Cllr. L Phillips expressed an interest in the position of Deputy Mayor, which was seconded by Cllr. G James and this was **agreed** by all present

**7. To Nominate Members to the following –**

- (a) Finance & Policy Committee**
- (b) Planning & Licensing Committee**
- (c) Environment Committee**
- (d) Newsletter/Web Page Committee**
- (e) Twinning Committee**
- (f) Events Committee**
- (g) Appraisal Sub-Committee**

Given that only 11 members have taken up their position on Town Council, it was agreed by all present to suspend Standing Orders and revisit Committee membership at the June meeting.

**8. To Nominate Members to the following -**

- (a) Town & Community Council Joint Liaison Committee**
- (b) C.C.B.C. Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee**
- (c) Blackwood Town Centre Management Group**
- (d) Retail Partnership Group**
- (e) After Hours/ Night time Economy Group / Bus Station Multi Agency Group**
- (f) One Voice Wales Area Committee & Larger Councils Committee**
- (g) Plas Mawr Community Centre Committee**
- (h) Bi-Centenary Committee**

Again, it was agreed by all present to suspend Standing Orders and revisit at the June meeting

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

The Clerk presented his report and after some discussion the following proposed dates were **agreed**

- 13<sup>th</sup>. June 2022
- 4<sup>th</sup>. July 2022
- 5<sup>th</sup>. September 2022
- 17<sup>th</sup>. October 2022 ( to accommodate Clerk's planned holiday arrangements )
- 7<sup>th</sup>. November 2022
- 5<sup>th</sup>. December 2022
- 9<sup>th</sup>. January 2023
- 6<sup>th</sup>. February 2023
- 6<sup>th</sup>. March 2023
- 3<sup>rd</sup>. April 2023
- 8<sup>th</sup>. May 2023 ( Annual General Meeting )

It was also agreed that the meetings be held at the Libanus Lifestyle Centre ( with hopefully remote access via Microsoft Teams) until the Blackwood Miners Institute is fully operational, and then a final decision can be taken.

Furthermore, that meetings start at 6.30 p.m. and notification of meetings, Agendas, Minutes and Reports continue to be forwarded via e mail.

### ***10. Co-option to fill Vacancies on Town Council following Elections***

The Clerk presented his report that with 4 positions still unfilled, under the Elections Local Government ( Wales ) Measures 2011 Paragraph 3.17, it makes clear that these vacancies can be filled by Co-option, and requires a public notice inviting applications from interested individuals to be published after the Annual General Meeting in the name of a member (Mayor).

After some discussion it was ***agreed*** the public notice be posted as soon as possible and asking interested parties to express their interest to the Clerk in writing by midday Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May. The Clerk stated that perhaps a Special Meeting of Council to deal with the Co-option Interviews be held on Monday 6<sup>th</sup>. June with a view to the new members attending the June scheduled meeting on 13<sup>th</sup>. June

The Clerk further reported that he had received a letter from Cllr. Roy Williams informing him he would not be attending this AGM and would not be taking up his position as Councillor for Cefn Fforest Ward on a matter of principle, not being mandated by the residents as returned unopposed. The Clerk stated he had checked with Caerphilly Deputy Returning Officer who had confirmed his views that this must now be treated as a Casual Vacancy and as such a Notice of Vacancy must be posted, and if notice in writing is given to the Returning Officer by ten Local Govt. Electors from the Ward an Election will be held to fill said vacancy. If no such notice is received within 14 days of the posting then this can then be filled by Co-option.

### ***11. Correspondence***

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

#### ***Caerphilly C.B.C.***

Notification that 1<sup>st</sup>. Instalment of Precept £29,729.10 has been transferred to Town Council Bank Account

Invitation to Code of Conduct Training on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May – Sirhowy & Ebbw Rooms, Penallta House Offices Tredomen Park starting at 5.00pm - ***Forwarded to members***

Notice of Road Closure of Wanborfa Road, Pengam from its junction with A4049 Pengam Road for a distance of approx 50m from 6.00 - 17.00 hours on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup>.May and from 6.00 – 17.00 hours on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>.May to allow for installation of new water services

With regard the Code of Conduct Training, the Mayor said he was pleased to report that five Blackwood members had attended and formed the majority on the evening.

It was intended that the session would be available to members online in the near future.

## **12. Schedule of Payments**

The Clerk presented his report on payments made /or due for payment, and these were **agreed** by Members -

		£. p
John Hold	Salary + Reimbursements May	989.83
Playworks	Fee May	20.00
HMRC	Tax/N.I. May	300.20

## **13. To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held remotely on 19th. April 2022**

It was proposed by Cllr. D Davies seconded by Cllr. G James and resolved by other members in attendance at that meeting that they be **agreed** as a true record

## **14. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising

## **15. Applications for Financial Assistance**

Cllrs. D Davies & G James declared an Interest in the Application re. Blackwood Moose Lodge as members of said organisation  
Cllr. G Edwards had already declared an interest as Chair of the Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association.

The Clerk presented his report in respect of Applications received for Financial Assistance and each was considered in turn

### ***Blackwood Musical Theatre Society***

After some discussion it was **agreed** a grant of £250 be awarded .  
Cllr. G James remarked that whilst the Mayor is normally invited as a guest, it would be good if all members were offered the opportunity to purchase tickets and notified asap.

### ***Blackwood Stars R.F.C.*** ( No previous grant made )

After some discussion it was **agreed** a grant of £250 be awarded and that the Club be notified Town Council would be willing to consider an Interest Free Loan if that helped in the future.  
Cllr D Box praised the Club for allowing a homeless lady sleeping rough nearby to use their shower facilities

### ***Mayor's Charity***

It was **agreed** a grant of £250 be awarded to the Past Mayor's Charity, Ty Hafan Trust

### ***HCT ( Helping Caring Team )***

After some discussion where members were most complimentary of the services provided by this organisation, they were mindful that the request was specifically in respect of ongoing revenue costs which are normally outside the remit of the Assistance offered. Furthermore members were mindful the service potentially covered areas outside of Blackwood. It was ***agreed*** that the organisation be invited to a future meeting to better outline their work in town and a decision on funding be deferred until then.

### ***Blackwood Moose Lodge***

Having both declared an Interest in this item Cllr. D Davies ( personal & Prejudicial ) left the meeting whilst Cllr.G James ( personal ) remained to answer any queries members may have had but took no part in the discussion or decision making.

After some discussion it was agreed a grant of £250 be awarded towards the costs of decoration. Members placed on record their appreciation of Blackwood Moose for making their premises the focal point for collections in respect of the DEC Humanitarian Appeal for Ukraine

### ***Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association***

Having previously declared an Interest Cllr. Edwards left the meeting

The Clerk informed members of the background to this issue with the Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association stepping in to re-open the toilets (with the investment of £8,900 to purchase paddle gates by Town Council ) at the Bus Station following CCBC's decision to close all public toilets as a cost saving exercise.

Unfortunately over the past 2 years there has been a catalogue of mindless vandalism resulting in the toilets having to be closed on several occasions and more recently due to the damage to the paddle gates it has again been out of service.

The Clerk reported he felt this was not a typical application for financial assistance, as the facility is a necessity to the town and felt should be treated as a special case. He suggested to members that consideration be given to viring the budget allocation of £1,600 included for election costs to meeting this request for £1,500 to undertake the necessary repairs and make the toilets operational asap.

Members were sympathetic towards this suggestion and many voiced their concern that a town the size of Blackwood definitely warranted the provision of toilets and that we should do all we can to ensure their continued presence.

During the discussion, several members raised the issue of the continued anti social behaviour in and around town and demanded a meeting with police and CCBC officers to discuss same. The Clerk reported that meetings were already taking place, but also agreed to invite Inspector Boucher to the scheduled June meeting to give an update to members and respond to any particular concerns they had.

The Clerk reminded members we were actually discussing Financial Assistance and had strayed from the subject.

After some further discussion it was ***agreed*** to vire the election budget to this scheme and that a grant of £1,500 be awarded.

Cllr. G James reminded members that since problems with the abuse of the radar key system no disabled facilities were available at the toilets and felt this was maybe an opportunity to address that particular issue also.

He identified that Town Council held fairly significant reserves and felt these should not be open ended time wise, citing Coed Duon Woods as a prime example. If no firm plans were forthcoming he proposed those currently earmarked reserves could be better utilised for the benefit of the town, and the potential provision of disabled toilet facilities seemed a most worthwhile and much needed project to progress.

Discussion took place and several members agreed this was something we should pursue further.

To progress business, the Clerk suggested we recall Cllr.G Edwards back into the meeting and ask if he could obtain an quotation with regard a coinpay system to the Disabled toilet which could then be discussed in more detail at a future meeting. This was *agreed* by all present.

Cllr. Edwards returned to the meeting thanked members for their financial support enabling the toilets to re-open, and agreed to obtain a quotation from Healthmatic regarding the disabled toilet, stating that when requested previously it was approx £2,500

The Clerk proposed that the reserves position highlighted by Cllr. G James be placed on the Agenda for the first Policy & Finance Committee meeting and this was *agreed*.

## ***16. Planning Applications***

The Clerk presented his report on Planning Applications received since the last meeting –

### ***Case Ref. 22/0367/FULL***

Location: 9 Coed Y Bryn Blackwood NP12 1HA

Proposal: Erect conservatory to the rear of the property

Case Officer: Kate Pearce ( 07874 641733 : pearck@caerphilly.gov.uk

### ***Case Ref. 22/0366/FULL***

Location: Newbold Solicitors 233 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AL

Proposal: Erect two storey rear extension

Case Officer: Chantalle Lamnea ( 07874 641747 : lamnec@caerphilly.gov.uk

### ***Case Ref. 22/0367/FULL Case Ref. 22/0400/FULL***

Location: 1 Aspen Avenue Blackwood NP12 1WW

Proposal: Convert garage to habitable room, extend driveway and associated works

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

### ***Case Ref. 22/0404/FULL***

Location: Sunville Bungalow High Street Blackwood NP12 1AN

Proposal: Erect single storey front extension

Case Officer: Bridget Jones-Crabtree ( 07850 916850 : jonesbas@caerphilly.gov.uk

**Case Ref. 22/0406/RET**

Location: 79 High Street Blackwood NP12 1BA

Proposal: Retain and complete the change of use of front shop section into two units from A1 to A3

Case Officer: Kate Pearce ( 07874 641733 : pearck@caerphilly.gov.uk

After a brief discussion it was **agreed** no objections be raised, albeit clarification be sought on the two storey rear extension planned at Newbold Solicitors 233 High Street, Blackwood

## **17. Reports**

The Clerk reported that the defibrillator at the Market place was not operational at present due to vandalism – the key pad being damaged and the box cannot now be opened to access the defibrillator.

The incident has been reported to the police and a quotation for a replacement door in the sum of £ 80 plus VAT & shipping has been received. It was **agreed** this be progressed.

The Clerk also reported that he had been approached by Caerphilly CBC Events team querying if Town Council would be proceeding with a Summer Event this year – Beach Party theme or Food / Craft Festival theme.

He had requested costings with the Beach Party estimated at approx £14k ( this excluding the hire of the Stage and entertainment estimated at a further £2k - £2.5k.), with a current budget provision of £10k.

He reported that the Cost of Traffic Signs/road closure/coning plan for the one day event was in excess of £3k. Members were shocked at this cost, and County Cllr. K Etheridge offered to make enquiries regarding the breakdown of same.

Members were however very keen to ensure that the town benefitted from a Summer Event especially having had the previous two years Events programme decimated by Covid.

Cllr. G James reminded members the planned and budgeted Bi- Centenary Celebrations had also suffered, with realistically little chance of much progressing some two years later, so additional funding was available.

The Clerk queried whether at the Special Meeting to Co-opt Members we might also take the opportunity to discuss the options in more detail in the hope we could be in a position to confirm with CCBC Events Team the preferred type of Event, and a budget for them to work with, as time is of the essence. Members were in agreement with this suggestion.