

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 17TH. OCTOBER 2022

Present : Cllr. G Edwards (Mayor)

Cllrs. K Williams, D Box, K Jones, K Etheridge, A Bradfield, C Erasmus & P Cook

Also Present County Cllr A Farina- Childs & Inspector Oliver Petty

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors R Mills & D Davies

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Police Report

The Mayor welcomed Inspector Oliver Petty to the meeting.

The Inspector reported that incidents of Anti social behaviour had reduced over the past couple of months, but that the police were not complacent about the problems, albeit a number of youths had been banned from attending the High Street.

He reported that there had been problems with a business on Albion Terrace, with numerous complaints from local residents, but that with the intervention of CCBC officers hopefully this had been sorted.

Problems had also been encountered with the homeless individual camped at the rear of Santander, but that hopefully that had been resolved given that the landowner has completely cleared the area in question.

He reported that a new sergeant had been recently appointed, together with a new Ward Manager for the Risca area, plus additional community support officers.

Safer Streets, a new Government led initiative has resulted in additional funding of approx £750k for Gwent to tackle ASB, burglary, robbery & theft, and that special packs were being made available for vulnerable people in the area.

He also reported that officers presence on the High Street will become more frequent.

He stated that he was well aware that Halloween & Bonfire Night were likely to be problematic, albeit under 16's were being targeted to try to dissuade them from anti social behaviour incidents.

Enforcement action had also been taken in respect of so called beggars in town

Cllr. D Box queried the ongoing incidents at the Chartist Bridge and the difficulty in getting Caerphilly C.B.C. to properly engage in introducing meaningful measures to mitigate future suicide attempts, partly because of a lack of a proper recording system agreeable by all parties. The Inspector stated he was aware of the issues at the Bridge, and the manpower implications for the police and other agencies at each call out. He stated he would welcome any contact from CHAMPS, and asked the member to make contact.

The Inspector was thanked for his attendance, and he left the meeting at this point

4. *Mayoral Report*

The Mayor reported on visits and meetings attended.

He also reported that he wished to attend the LGA Conference in London on Friday 28th. October and asked members agreement – the anticipated costs would be £180 train fare, with Conference Fee gratis
Members were in full agreement

5. *County Borough Report*

Cllr. K Etheridge reported that a decision was still awaited in respect of the proposed Persimmon development at Grove Park.

Furthermore, there was no movement on the proposed Skateboard Park at the Showfield, given the latest proposed siting would require the removal of 20 plus trees .

He confirmed there had been quite a significant reduction in ASB as outlined by the Inspector, and that Planning Officers had issued an Enforcement Notice in respect of the business on Albion Terrace.

He also reported on the worsening litter problem in and around town, and the Clerk was asked to raise same with officers.

Cllr. A Farina-Childs reported on a rough sleeper problem near the Thornecombe Road play area, where pornographic material had also been found – he had contacted both CCBC & Cornerstone to assist with this problem.

He also reported on break ins at both Libanus & Blackwood Primary Schools over recent weeks and the fact that he had been working to get overhanging trees on Gordon Road cut back.

6. Correspondence

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

Cllr. Sarah Wareham

Dear Chair, John

Please can you take this email as notification that I wish to resign from Blackwood Town Council with immediate effect.

I wish you and the town council all the best for the future with regards to both council work and Blackwood itself,

Regards,
Sarah Wareham

Cllr. Louise Phillips

Hi John

I wish to ask for a leave of absence please.

I would like to ask for 3 months, this is due to me having an operation on Monday 17th October 2022.

I will be off my feet, and in plaster.

I would be grateful if this could be put before the committee.

I wish you all the best, and a very merry Christmas to you all.

Kind regards

Louise Phillips (Deputy Mayoress)

Cllr. Andrew Short

Hello good morning John this is my request to have three months off due to some ill health issues be grateful if you could put this through to the meeting and then I will be back after Christmas

Many Thanks

Andrew Short

Caerphilly C.B.C.

Notification of Clean Up at Cliff Road – Embankment & Watercourse – forwarded to members

Footfall Figures Forwarded to members

Revised Code of Conduct Training – now 4pm. Thursday 20th October – in person or remotely – forwarded to members

Notification of Reassessment of School Crossing Patrol needs at Blackwood Primary School

In conjunction with GAVO notification of new date for Voluntary Awards Evening at BMI, now Thursday 20th. October Invite to Mayor plus 1 with Mayor making presentation to Welsh Culture & Heritage category

Good afternoon,

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself as the newly appointed Principle Town Centre Officer for CCBC. I have been in post since last month (how time flies) and slowly but surely getting to know the area and businesses. I have not had the pleasure of meeting any town councillors to date but I'm sure it won't be long before I am able to meet some of you.

My previous post was Town Centre Manger for another LA, and this experience and skill set will contribute to assisting towns within CCBC through the difficult times, creating places for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Currently I am carrying out a consultation regarding the Parklets that were introduced during Covid to assist hospitality establishments. I have started the consultation with businesses and would also like to consult with town council members to ensure that we are getting a fair and accurate insight into the Parklets.

The main questions are;

Have the Parklets had a negative or positive effect on the town?

Would you support any of the Parklets on a permanent basis?

Do you have any additional comments?

Please could you either circulate to the relevant town councillors or provide email details so that I am able to forward on.

Kind Regards

Jo

Jo Hillier-Raikes

Prif Swyddog Canol Tref a Chymorth Busnes | Principle Officer Town Centre and Business Support
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili | Caerphilly County Borough Council

One Voice Wales

Training Courses

Forwarded to members

Invoice in respect of additional courses attended by members August/September in the sum of £35

Training Plan - Model Plan & Template - would propose Special Meeting to complete same and complete by 30th Nov. deadline

In respect of the resignation by Cllr. Sarah Wareham, the Clerk reported he had asked her to reconsider, but to no avail. Having notified members, he had posted the necessary Notice of Election, but that no request had been made to the Returning Officer by the stipulated date.

In respect of the Applications for Leave of Absence from Cllrs. Louise Phillips & Andrew Short, after some discussion it was ***agreed*** both be granted 3 months Leave of Absence as requested

In respect of the letter from Jo Hillier-Raikes, the newly appointed Principle Officer Town Centre & Business Support, it was **agreed** the Clerk write in support of the Parklets in town, albeit with some reservations regarding the one outside the old Square Café.

Furthermore, members **agreed** with the Clerks proposal that the officer be invited along to the next Town Council meeting on November 7th.

7. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented his report on payments have been made /due for payment, and all were **agreed** -

| | | £. P |
|-----------------------------|--|----------|
| Peter Jones | Beach Party Costs | 180.00 |
| One Voice Wales | Training Courses | 35.00 |
| Blackwood Methodist Church | Room Hire | 40.00 |
| Katherine Watkins | Fee Oct. Sals | 20.00 |
| HMRC | Tax/ N.I. October | 300.20 |
| John Hold | Oct. Salary & reimbursements | 1,030.72 |
| Blackwood Town Cricket Club | Financial Assistance | 500.00 |
| George Edwards | Travel Costs | 120.00 |
| Don Elsbury | Repairs to Merry Xmas (Incl. £37.02 VAT) | 222.10 |
| Caerphilly C.B.C. | GAVO Awards Evening Sponsorship | 250.00 |
| Don Elsbury | Christmas Tree lights for Market Place (Incl.3158.08 VAT) | 948.46 |
| George Edwards | Additional Travel Costs | 96.40 |
| Don Elsbury | Replacement Cross Street Lights (Incl £415.74 VAT) | 2,494.40 |
| J.P.Fulton | Photos for Notice Board | 100.00 |
| Town & Comm. Councils | Subscription Fee | 100.00 |

8. *To Confirm the Minutes of Town Council Meeting held on 5th. September 2022*

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

9. *Matters Arising*

There were no matters arising

10. *Vacancies on Town Council/ Co- option*

The Clerk reported that the necessary Notice of Vacancy for Blackwood South Ward following the resignation of Cllr. S Wareham was posted on 23rd. September, and as no request for Election has been received by Thursday 13th. October, we are now able to arrange co-option.

Together with the already existing vacancies in Cefn Fforest East & Blackwood Central, the Clerk proposed an additional Notice be posted requesting expressions of Interest in Co-option, and that all are interviewed within the next two/three weeks (Special Meeting will be arranged)

After some discussion, it was **agreed** that rather than Full Council interviewing the prospective co-optees, that a small Committee undertake the task, and after nominations, it was **unanimously agreed** that Councillors G Edwards, A Bradfield, K Williams, C Erasmus & P Cook form the Committee.

Given that we are currently functioning with 3 agreed leave of absences, members felt it was imperative these interviews are held ASAP with a view to the new members being in place for the November meeting. After further discussion it was **agreed** interviews be held week commencing Monday 31st. October, and that the Clerk make the necessary arrangements

11. Remembrance Services Arrangements

The Mayor reported progress on arrangements for the Remembrance Services – Friday 11th. at Blackwood Market Place and Sunday 13th. at the War memorial.

He had met with the schools and local ministers and was finalising the Order of Service with the printer over the coming week.

It was agreed after some discussion that the handouts advertising the Remembrance Service which had been prepared in readiness for the Beach Party should now be distributed in town on Saturday 29th.

October, and several members agreed to meet at Costa Coffee at 10.00am. It was also agreed handouts could be circulated by the British Legion Poppy sellers at their stalls in and around town.

It had been agreed that refreshments this year be provided from St. Margaret's Church Hall, and a budget of up to £500 was ***agreed*** by members

12. Flag Poles at Remembrance Garden & War Memorial

The Mayor reported that he had visited the Remembrance Garden now that the improvements had been completed by Mr & Mrs Davies, and had personally thanked them for their hard work. He had also agreed that if they required additional plants to complete the works to go ahead and purchase same and that Town Council would reimburse. Members agreed the Mayors actions, and several commented on the visual impact their improvement work had made on the area.

The Mayor reported that he was aware that Town Council had previously considered the potential provision of flag poles for both the Remembrance Garden and the area around the War Memorial, but that things had never progressed, and he had therefore sought a quotation for 4 x 6 metre flag poles (1 to be positioned at Remembrance Garden & 3 at the War Memorial Site) plus 1 Union flag and 1 Welsh flag (it is anticipated RBL flags would also need to be sourced)

After some discussion, where members were fully in agreement with the proposal, it was ***agreed*** that Standing Orders be suspended, given the specialist nature of the order, and the Quotation be agreed in the sum of £1,789.48 + VAT

The Clerk informed members that planning permission was very likely to be required given the height of the proposed flag poles, and that he would make the necessary enquiries

13. Verbal Report Beach Party 2022 / Potential for additional Event in 2023 & Preferred Date for Beach Party 2023

The Clerk gave a brief report on the Beach Party cancellation and deplored the amount of abuse Town Council, and the Mayor in particular, had received from certain quarters on social media. He stated that he was disappointed with the initial press release from CCBC, but they had subsequently released an additional one quoting proper protocol under the given circumstances. He anticipated that the costs would be in the region of £6,200, but was confident some of the costs paid to performers might be transferred to future events – Christmas etc. where they would hopefully perform gratis or at reduced fees, and the garlands and balloons purchased would be held in readiness for next year.

Caerphilly Events team had asked Town Council if they might consider an additional Event to compensate for the cancellation, but after some discussion it was ***agreed*** given the emphasis on Christmas and the current low number of active members we should stick to current events planned, but look for an earlier date for the Beach Party. Having anticipated this decision the Clerk reported that potential available dates (after consulting with CCBC Events team) were 10th. June/1st. July/8th. July. Members ***agreed*** we should aim for Saturday 8th. July 2023 for Beach Party Event

14. Turn the Town Pink

The Clerk reported that Town Council had been a supporter of Turn the Town Pink since its inception several years ago and had built up a good working relationship with the Dedicated Charity Officer, who had unfortunately been re-deployed and not replaced.

However, over the years Beverley Edwards and others have assisted and were with Pontllanfraith Inner Wheel already planning a shopping event in Bon Marche on 20th. October, together with trying to get local businesses involved again with raffle prizes etc.

Given we have a budget of £250 to support this event, after some discussion it was ***agreed*** this amount be donated to the Breast Cancer Unit at Ystrad Mynach Hospital

15. Verbal Report on planned Christmas Events - Christmas Market / Craft Fair and Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert plus possible Christmas Tree in Market Place or elsewhere in town

The Clerk confirmed the Christmas Market/ Craft Fair was being held on Saturday 26th.November and reported he was working on the Entertainment Programme, trying to ensure where possible we mitigate the costs associated with the Beach Party in trying to get acts/entertainment previously booked and paid to appear gratis or at a greatly reduce cost.

He reported he had booked a Pipe & Drum Band to lead Santa's Sleigh through the High Street, culminating in the Christmas Lights being switched on at 4.30 pm.

The Clerk informed members that through no fault of Town Council or our Contractors, the Festive lighting in the High Street last year was very poor. Due to the re-positioning of lamp posts as part of the Parklets Scheme by the Caerphilly C.B.C. our lights were taken down and we were not in effect in a position to hang any possible alternatives. He complained bitterly to Officers, but it was too late in the day to resolve, but they promised that this year they would assist wherever possible to ensure the lighting was something we could be proud of again. I contacted Officers and asked them to liaise with Elsburys, our contractors to ensure the problems were overcome in readiness for our Light Switch On as part of Christmas Market/Craft Fair.

He had been copied into correspondence from the Borough to our contractors which intimated that in this instance CCBC will authorise the return of catenary festoon lighting to be erected onto the street lighting at Blackwood High Street, and that due to the column relocations, the previous festive lighting equipment will no longer be suitable and its replacement will be necessary and that the contractors should contact us directly and advise us accordingly.

So the Festive lighting should return in full this year, and the Clerk will ensure the Borough pay for the replacement lights as there was no consultation/ or contact that this was happening.

On the following Thursday, 1st. December the Lantern Parade would congregate from approx 6.30pm at the Market Place and walk down through the Precinct and up the High Street to the Methodist Church for the Christmas Carol Concert with Blackwood & Libanus Schools and Mynyddislwyn Choir and Oakdale Silver Band or Markham Brass Band together with young soloist.

The Concert will be followed with seasonal refreshments downstairs in the Church.

The Mayor reported that he was hoping to organise a Christmas Tree for the Market Place, and had contacted both the Market Owners and Blackwood Garden Centre and was awaiting confirmation/ permission

Members *agreed* this was well worth pursuing, and the Clerk was asked to contact Elsbury's to make enquiries regarding purchase of lights and them being able to dress same.

16. Budget Monitoring Report for Period 6 to 30th. September 2022

The Clerk presented his report, which was *agreed* by members.

Cllr. K Etheridge commented on the amount of surpluses held by Town Council at present and proposed these be examined and allocated to services/ projects to benefit the residents of the town as a matter of some urgency. He identified further possible support at the Bus Station toilets.

The Clerk reminded members this would ultimately have an effect on future precept demands, and whilst he agreed the surpluses needed to be earmarked, felt this should be looked at by Policy & Finance Committee first, with a view to making proposals to Council.

After some further discussion it was agreed a Policy & Finance Committee be held on Thursday 3rd. November

17. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales - Draft Determinations

The Clerk presented the Report on proposals out for consultation, and explained these would be revisited for implementation at a later date to take effect from April 2023

Payments towards costs and expenses of members of Community and Town Councils;
Determination 4

Last year the Panel carried out a major review of the remuneration framework for community and town councils and undertook a comprehensive consultation exercise with the sector. The Framework was updated then and this year the Panel has decided to make limited but important changes.

The Panel recognise that all members of community and town councils necessarily spend time working from home on council business. This was the case before and during COVID and is continuing. As a result, members have extra domestic costs and also need office consumables. The Panel considers members should not be out of pocket for carrying out their duties. It therefore proposes the following.

Basic payment for extra costs of working from home

All councils must pay their members £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home.

Set payment for consumables

Councils must either pay their members £52 a year for the cost of office consumables required to carry out their role, or alternatively councils must enable members to claim full reimbursement for the cost of their office consumables. It is a matter for each council to make and record a policy decision in respect of when and how the payments are made and whether they are paid monthly, yearly or otherwise. The policy should also state whether and how to recover any payments made to a member who leaves or changes their role during the financial year.

The level of payments is set out in Table 2.

Table 2 – Payments to Community and Town Councils

| <i>Group 3</i> | <i>Electorate 5,000 to 9,999</i> |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Extra Costs Payment | Mandatory for all members |
| Senior Role | Optional up to 3 members |
| Mayor or Chair | Optional - Up to a maximum of £1,500 |
| Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair | Optional - Up to a maximum of £500 |
| Attendance Allowance | Optional |
| Financial Loss | Optional |
| Travel and Subsistence | Optional |
| Cost of Care or Personal Assistance | Mandatory |

There are no further changes to the payments and benefits paid to elected members and therefore all other Determinations from 2022 to 2023 still stand and should be applied in 2023 to 2024, including those covering:

- Payments for undertaking senior roles;
- Contributions towards costs of care and personal assistance;
- Reimbursement of Travel and subsistence costs;
- Compensation for financial loss:
- Attendance allowance and
- Co-opted Members

18. New Mayoral Chain

The Mayor reported that the existing Mayoral Chain was at its capacity and a new one was required. He had made enquiries with Thomas Fattorini, a respected and renowned manufacturer of Civic regalia who had quoted approx £5,200 for a new chain, sterling silver gold plated, which would last a further 25/30 years. After some discussion it was **agreed** this item be deferred to the Policy & Finance Committee for consideration.

19. Adoption of New Standing Orders - propose this be deferred to Policy & Finance Committee

It was **agreed** this be deferred to Policy & Finance for discussion.

However, Cllr. K Etheridge stated that he wished the issue regarding Chairman/Mayor under our current Standing Orders be considered sooner and would be raising same at next meeting

20. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received since the last meeting, verbally reporting he had an application included regarding tree works at his home. After some discussion it was **agreed** there seemed nothing contentious and that no objections be raised -

Case Ref. 22/0753/OUT

Location: Land At Bryncynon Tredegar Road Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1BW

Proposal: Erect detached dwelling for a single detached house

Case Officer: Elizabeth Rowley (07850 916862 : rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 22/0767/FULL

Location: 1 Mayhill Bungalows Blackwood NP12 1EB

Proposal: Convert loft, install dormers, and raise roof ridge height

Case Officer: Abbie-Jane Stokes (07907 574195 : stokea@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 22/0782/FULL

Location: HSBC 91 - 93 High Street Blackwood NP12 1PN

Proposal: Replace existing ATM with a new accessible ATM, new CCTV

Case Officer: Abbie-Jane Stokes (07907 574195 : stokea@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 22/0783/ADV

Location: HSBC 91 - 93 High Street Blackwood NP12 1PN

Proposal: Erect internally illuminated ATM sign

Case Officer: Abbie-Jane Stokes (07907 574195 : stokea@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 22/0777/TPO

Location: Heddfan 12 Aspen Avenue Blackwood NP12 1WW

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

Case Officer: Abbie-Jane Stokes (07907 574195 : stokea@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 22/0816/RET

Location: 79 High Street Blackwood NP12 1BA

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

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

Case Ref. 22/0821/FULL

Location: 27 Beaumaris Way Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1DF

Proposal: Erect first floor side extension

Case Officer: Abbie-Jane Stokes (07907 574195 : stokea@caerphilly.gov.uk)

21. Reports

There were no Reports, albeit Cllr. A Farina-Childs took the opportunity to place on record his thanks to Cllr. Kirsty Williams for her support in his latest Charity Walk raising funds for Blackwood Stars Veterans Rugby team