

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5TH. DECEMBER 2022

Present : Cllr G Edwards (Mayor)

Cllrs. A Bradfield, K Etheridge, A Farina-Childs, D Davies, K Williams, C Erasmus, R Mills,
K Jones & C Clark

Cllr D Box attended remotely by telephone

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr.J. Pearce.
Late apologies received from Cllr. P Cook

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Jo Raikes – Hillier - Principle Officer Town Centre and Business Support - Caerphilly C.B.C

The Mayor welcomed Jo to the meeting, who then gave a brief resume of her career and experience in Town Centre Development.

She stated she was eager to work with all interested parties to get the best outcome for the town and was undertaking an exercise to identify where we are now – where we want to be – and how we get there. She said she would welcome input from members.

Various members highlighted their concerns regarding the new format of meetings with businesses and other stakeholders, initially an evening meeting and now a proposed breakfast meeting on Wednesday of this week. No minutes or notes appears to have been received regarding the first meeting, which was poorly attended and members queried the logic of an early meeting – had businesses been consulted. In fact several queries and concerns from businesses in town regarded the perceived lack of proper consultation and that this needed urgent attention.

Whilst the Town Centre Management Committee hadn't met for some time due to the pandemic, members felt that was a much better way of communicating with local members and business/other organisations and partners, and where officers from all relevant departments were on hand to answer queries raised.

Members also queried the logic of the walk about in town, where members of neighbouring wards had been invited.

Jo apologised that being new to post she had not been party to decisions made previously, but did defend the invitation to other members being invited to the walk about, as the town depended on their constituents as well as Blackwood residents for its success.

Members voiced various concerns regarding bin storage and the potential health and safety issues, whilst also highlighting the number of empty outlets in town and in the Precinct.

Jo said she would take these issues back to the team, and then asked members for their views on the retention of the parklets in town. The Clerk stated he had forwarded Town Councils views, but members reiterated their support for retention of the parklets, with one possible proviso regarding the one outside the Square Café, which didn't seem to be used anywhere near as often as the others in town.

The Mayor thanked Jo for her attendance, and several members apologised for venting their frustrations towards her, realising she was new in post.

4. *Mayoral Report*

The Mayor reported briefly on functions he had attended since his last report, namely Remembrance Services and Christmas Events that were to be discussed more fully later.

He also reminded members of the Christingle Service to be held tomorrow Tuesday 6th. December 6.00pm at the Methodist Church, and asked members for their assistance to prepare for same. Access to the Church had been arranged from about 4.30pm

5. *County Borough Report*

Cllr. K Etheridge gave a brief update on the continuing grievances in regard to the Taylor Wimpey Development at Cwmgelli, with drainage issues to the fore

He also highlighted the situation at the Stagecoach Depot at Penmaen, Woodfieldside with the closure imminent. The Company has stated that all buses currently operating from Blackwood will be moved to Cwmbran and/or Caerphilly. Customers should see no reduction in services as a result of the closure, and all drivers and staff who wish to remain with Stagecoach will relocate to the other depots.

6. *Correspondence*

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

One Voice Wales Notification of Training Courses for Nov/Dec. – forwarded to members

Caerphilly C.B.C. Various correspondence relating Christmas Market/ Craft Fair

News On Line (Forwarded to members)

Footfall Figures (Forwarded to members)

Invitation to members to attend Blackwood Town Centre Business Networking Meeting being held at 8.00am on Wednesday 7th December at Blackwood Miners' Institute

Beverley Edwards We handed money over to Sian Redwood on Monday as planned. I explained that the Town Council were giving £250.00p I presume that has been paid directly .
I just thought you would like to know that if I have the correct information I calculate that we raised £2,363.49p
A big thank you to all.

Welsh Govt.

Section 137 Local Govt. Act 1972

This is to notify you that the appropriate sum for the purposes of section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 (the 1972 Act) for Community and Town Councils in Wales for the financial year 2023-24 is £9.93.

Section 137(1) of the 1972 Act permits each Community or Town Council to incur expenditure for purposes for which it has no other specific powers if the Council considers that the expenditure is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to, the area or any part of it, or all or some of its inhabitants, providing that the benefit is commensurate with the expenditure incurred. Community and Town Councils are also permitted under section 137(3) to incur expenditure for certain charitable and other purposes. The maximum expenditure that can be incurred under both sections 137(1) and (3) for the financial year 2023-24 will be £9.93 per elector.

Gwent Police

Notification/ Invitation to Town Safe Initiative Meeting at 5.30pm on Thursday 8th. December at Blackwood Police Station

One Beat

Notification/Invitation to Voluntary Sector Showcase Drop In Event at Blackwood Methodist Church on Friday 2nd December from 10.00am – 3.00p

7. Schedule of Payments

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

		£. P
George Edwards	Items for Christingle Service	33.18
K & R Print	Orders of Service – Remembrance Service	225.00
Islwyn Ministry	Financial Assistance	584.00
Mrs D.L. Stephens	Buffet – Remembrance	153.66
Thomas Fattorini	Chain Of Office - Part Payment (incl. £475 VAT)	2,850.00
George Edwards	Items for Christingle Service	39.96
Pontllanfraith Rotary	Xmas Market	550.00
Henllys Pipe & Drum	Xmas Market	250.00
Mynyddislwyn Choir	Remembrance/ Xmas Market/ Carol Concert	300.00
KLA Dance	Xmas Market	100.00
Markham Brass Band	Remembrance/ Xmas Market	250.00
Studio 54	Xmas Market	360.00
John Hold	Nov. Sals & Reimbursements	990.67
Katherine Watkins	Nov. Fee	20.00
HMRC	Nov. Tax/N.I.	294.90
Cwm Bakery	Refreshments Carol Concert	210.00
John Hold	Reimbursement Selection Boxes	900.00
Caerphilly C.B.C.	Poster Design – Christingle	40.00
John Hold	Reimbursement - Carol Concert / Xmas Market	116.93
Aneurin Bevan UHB	Breast Cancer Unit Ystrad Mynach – Fin. Assistance	250.00

Members raised some concern that the Clerk was using his personal finances for some Council business and queried whether it might be advisable to obtain Debit Cards for the Clerk and Mayor to better ensure accountability whilst safeguarding their finances. It was **agreed** the Clerk make enquiries

8. To Confirm the Minutes of Town Council Meeting held on 7th. November 2022

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

9. Matters Arising

The Clerk reported Pay Award referred to last month would equate to an increase of £832 per annum based on 16 hours per week on SCP28 bringing the salary to £15,015 per annum.

Members noted same and *agreed* the uplift be implemented asap

10. Notice of Motion - Cllr. K Etheridge – Amendment to Standing Orders

The Notice of Motion proposed by Cllr. K Etheridge & Seconded by Cllr. D Box read as follows

I hereby request the Town Council amend / remove the Standing Order which only allows an Election of the Mayor for a 12 months period, and allows election for further periods of time should it be deemed necessary by the Town Council and results in the following -

The proposed procedure:

1. All Members are eligible to be elected to the office of Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor and serve for a period of twelve months.
2. The Chair presiding at Annual meeting will ask for a show of hands for all Members who wish to be considered for election to the office of Mayor.
3. The Proper Officer will record the names of all Members who indicated their wish to be included in the ballot.
4. Each Member will be invited to cast their ballot outside the meeting room. Members to be invited in alphabetical order of surname. [in the event of Members joining the meeting remotely, they will be invited to email the Clerk with their vote(s)]
5. The Member with the most votes will be elected to the office of Mayor for that year and will be invited to sign their declaration of acceptance of office in the presence of the Proper Officer.
6. In the event of a tie in votes, the lowest candidate will be eliminated from the pool and the ballot will take place once again.
7. On the completion of the election of the Mayor, the procedure will once again resume to elect a Member to the office of Deputy Mayor.
8. A Member holding the office of Deputy Mayor for a period of twelve months does not automatically have the right to presume election to the office of Mayor the following year. All Members are eligible to be elected to the office of Mayor at Annual meeting each year.
After some discussion it was *unanimously agreed* the Standing Orders be amended in accordance with the above

11. Verbal Update on Remembrance Services

The Mayor gave a verbal update on the Remembrance Services, and the general opinion of the public was that this was a significant improvement on previous years, with attendances up considerably at both services, and all agreeing it had been much better organised and a much more professional and fitting tribute to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

He placed on record his thanks to all those who had assisted/participated in the services, and urged members to ensure we build on this success and look to improve where possible in future years. The P.A. system still needs some attention, suggestions of a short parade and the possibility of a lone piper to play the last post have also been made. He also stated that he had already made tentative enquiries regarding choir, band and additional schools to attend next years event.

Members congratulated the Mayor for all his hard work and effort in ensuring such successful events. Cllr. A Farina-Childs whilst supporting the congratulations asked if consideration could be given to providing wire to keep the wreaths in place after the event.

12. Verbal Update on Christmas Events to date

The Clerk gave a brief update on the Christmas Market/ Craft Fair & Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert

Given the weather on the day, the general opinion seemed to be the Christmas Market/ Craft Fair had been a success with good numbers attending throughout the day. With regards the entertainment stage, there had been some issues regarding apparent unsavoury language during an excerpt from one of the stage shows featured, and also regarding the volume levels, unfortunately outside our direct control.

With regard the Lantern Parade/ Carol Concert, there had been some issues regarding timings of Christmas Tree Light Switch On and the Parade, but decisions on the evening negated any significant delays. The Event again was very well attended with a packed church. The Mayor placed on record his thanks to everyone who took part in / assisted at the event, with special thanks to Cllr. C Erasmus and the lady from the Methodist Church who took care of the refreshments. He also reported that the surplus food at the end of the evening was, after trying and failing to locate a local recipient, he delivered to a Homeless Shelter in Cardiff .

Cllr A Farina-Childs whilst agreeing that the events had been very successful queried if we had sufficient hi- viz vests for future events, and whether in future we could ensure we had sufficient lanterns thus ensuring no child felt left out. The Clerk responded that over the years many of the hi- viz vests had disappeared, and agreed more were required. With regard the lanterns, he had tried to source same, but the Company previously used were no longer trading and he had also tried to arrange for a lantern making stall as in previous years, but had sadly failed, but would take on board again for next year. After some further discussion, it was agreed these and other issues be discussed at a De-brief at the next Events Committee meeting.

13. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received since the last meeting, together with a verbal update on one received earlier in the day.
was ***agreed*** there seemed nothing contentious and that no objections be raised -

Case Ref. 22/0979/FULL

Location: 11 Coed Y Bryn Blackwood NP12 1HA

Proposal: Erect single storey rear extension

Case Officer: Joe Simmons (07874 641751 : simmoj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 22/0972/FULL

Location: 12 Lon Pennant, Blackwood NP12 1EL

Proposal: Retain & complete the enlargement of rear dormer, erect new outbuilding & external alterations & landscaping

Case Officer: Joe Simmons (07874 641751 : simmoj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

14. Reports

There were no reports