

**MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON 24TH. JANUARY 2023**

Present : Councillor K Williams (Chair)
Councillors A Bradfield & G Edwards

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllrs. K Etheridge, P Cook, D Davies & R Mills

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest

3. To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 4th. Noember 2022

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

4. Matters arising

The Clerk reported that the Chain of Office was being produced and delivery expected over the coming weeks.

He apologised that for personal reasons he had not been able to follow up on identifying potential costs of a part time toilet attendant/ cleaner or the Bus Station toilets or the requirements regarding planned flag poles at the War Memorial, but hoped to be in a position to do so in the near future.

5. To Consider Applications for Financial Assistance

The Clerk reported that he had received two applications for Financial Assistance over the past day or so from –

HCT (Helping Caring Team) requesting £550 to fund a washer/ dryer machine to enable homeless and vulnerable people in Blackwood to wash & dry their clothes free of charge. HCT would need to install plumbing at their premises at 28 Bridge Street to enable same and are planning to fund the estimated cost (£200) from their own funds

Vikram Yadh (Caerphilly Comic Con) requesting £2,200 to run a 12 month project based in Blackwood Library (and involving 17 schools in and around the Blackwood area) to encourage and develop an interest in comic arts, Sci Fi and table top gaming among children and families in the community, thus helping to promote Arts, Humanities & Science Technology, Engineering & Maths

The Mayor reported that he had received a copy of the HCT application and had a few queries regarding same and financial information provided.

The Clerk suggested that perhaps these applications be deferred to Town Council for consideration, and after some discussion this was **agreed**.

6. Arrangements for Payments of Members Contributions towards Expenses

The Clerk outlined his proposals regarding arrangements for Payment of Members Contributions towards Expenses and after some discussion it was **agreed to recommend to Town Council** that - Payments (currently £150 per annum/ or pro rata) are automatically made annually each March (unless members notify the Clerk in writing they do not wish to receive same) by direct transfer to Members Bank Account.

Members are requested to provide their bank details – Sort Code/ Account Name & Number as soon as possible to the Clerk / Proper Officer

7. Budget Monitoring Report for Period 9 to 31st. December 2022

The Clerk presented his report which identified the probability of an additional £72,018 increase in balances (£69,915 being in respect of CIL) , and this was **agreed** by members.

Whilst considering the report, the Mayor highlighted the assistance of Wetherspoon’s staff in providing refreshments for the Remembrance Service and a Christmas Event. Whilst they had been reimbursed for the food purchased, he was conscious they had not been paid for their time, and queried if perhaps a goodwill payment should be made to the individuals concerned.

8. Budget Requirements 2023/2024/ Reserves Position/ Precept Setting / Medium Term Budget Strategy

The Clerk presented a proposed budget for 2023/2024 based on current spending patterns, plus inflationary increases on some expenditure heads, but which also reflected the Council’s previous decisions to continue the provision of hanging baskets, continued sponsorship of the Blackwood RFC Firework Display and the GAVO Volunteer Awards Evening and ongoing Events Programme and Grants to Voluntary Organisations, including Turn the Town Pink in support of the planned Breast Cancer Unit at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (£250), whilst also including a budget of £1,000 to support the maintenance of the Remembrance Garden and provide assistance at the Remembrance Day Service which received much praise last November.

He also reported that he had included provision for the Newsletter at £2,000 for the coming year, together with provision for a potential Civic Awards Evening in the sum of £2,000, and also £1,000 for the potential provision of Christmas Selection Boxes to Blackwood & Libanus Schools

The Clerk also took the opportunity to highlight the inclusion of £3,300 for 2023/24, and future years in respect of the potential Contributions to Members Expenses and £1,600 for next year in respect of Members Training Programme

After some discussion it was **unanimously agreed to recommend** to Town Council the budget as presented and that the Precept for 2023/2024 remain at £20 per Band D Property, which will necessitate utilising £12,830 from balances

Furthermore, that the Medium Term Budget Strategy be accepted in principle, and obviously updated as and when more certain issues become clearer.

Members also wished to recommend to Town Council that consideration be given to holding some form of celebrations in town for the Kings Coronation, and that these again be funded from balances

