

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 10TH. JULY 2023

Present : Cllr. G Edwards (Mayor)
Cllr. R Mills (Deputy Mayor)
Cllrs. K Etheridge, A Farina-Childs, D Davies, K Williams, D Box, K Jones, C Erasmus,
C Clarke, M Gwynne, N Nyle
Also present Police Officers John Edwards & Cerwyn Lewis
Cllr. A Short arrived shortly after start of meeting during Police Report

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr. N Dix

2. Declarations Of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Police Report

The Mayor welcomed the Officers to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. The Officers in turn passed on the apologies of the Inspector & Sergeant who were unavailable at this time.

The Officers gave a brief update on issues affecting the town identifying homeless individuals as one problem together with issues around the bus station, where several individuals had been recently issued with Community Protection Warnings for anti social behaviour/ drug and/or alcohol abuse.

Reports of asb had thankfully reduced fairly significantly, but officers were not complacent given that schools breakup and lighter evenings would more than likely fuel an increase in such behaviour, but that patrols would increase to hopefully counter same.

The Officers reported that bins at the bus station had recently been set alight and hat two girls had been questioned in connection with this.

Cllr. A Short reported that his late arrival for the meeting had been related to a similar issue where a waste bin had apparently been set alight near Baked With Love at the top of Gravel Lane, and used to ram the doors of the property. He had witnessed youths trying to kick the doors in presumably to make entry into the property, and had given chase.

Cllr. Short stated that bins were regularly being burnt or damaged and sometimes used to damage cars or property, and queried maybe whether if the bins were chained to fences at the respective properties this might alleviate some of the problems.

Members considered this a reasonable suggestion, and the Clerk was asked to write to the Town Centre Manager asking that perhaps businesses could be visited and encouraged to take this suggestion on board.

The Officers present were seemingly unaware of this latest incident, but stated they would follow up on their return to the station

4. County Borough Report

Cllrs. A Farina-Childs & K Etheridge gave a brief update on issues they have been dealing with –

Skate Park - members referred to a recent meeting with Officers, where for the first time a number of various other options for the siting of the Park had apparently been identified, albeit never having been shared or actively considered.

The preferred siting now, whilst still on the Showfield, has moved from near the building to an area adjacent to Greenwood Road, near the fence .

Homelessness - various contact with partner agencies has indicated that they accept that a number of the rough sleepers do not want to be part of the system, and the feeling is that perhaps they should be looking to reinstate the Night Shelters

Car Park rear of High Street Blackwood - meeting with officers following complaints from William Street residents regarding Bin storage facility, continual litter, foul smell, rats and possible baiting solutions overgrown weeds and foliage

Blackwood Placemaking Plan Meeting - An interesting and productive meeting, where the Consultants, The Urbanists, plan is looking towards the regeneration of the town and seeking via consultation with partner agencies and the general public towards a Strategic Vision – short medium & long term.

Interested in identifying what is unique about Blackwood, and felt more could be made of its links to Chartism and the musical and sporting talents that have originated here – Manics, Joe Calzaghe Alun Pask etc. Members queried with the current number of empty shops on the High Street at present whether consideration could be given to a Heritage Centre/ One Stop Shop type facility which could highlight our unique heritage whilst also allowing various agencies/ charities and information groups a presence in town.

Members present had mourned the demise of the small independent family businesses that had filled the High Street, but also recognised the apparent success of the café culture, partially as a result of the introduction of the parklets.

The Consultant shared his thoughts around building on the night time economy opportunities on the High Street, whilst also querying the possibility of making the town High Street one way.

Initial report is hoped to be completed late autumn/ early winter

5. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor gave a brief update on the Beach Party held on Saturday thanking those members who attended to show support whilst acknowledging the apologies also received.

Thankfully the weather had not been as bad as originally forecast, as confirmed by the numbers attending the event throughout the day.

We haven't received feedback yet from traders etc, this will follow, but we have good news on the Footfall with some 7,450 attending the event, with approx 2,400 more people in town than the previous Saturday. It is the highest footfall we have on record for this event.

The spring fair had 8,058 visitors, but taking into account the weather it is reasonable to surmise we would have easily topped this had it been a nice day .Also we do know that a number of traders sold out so it must have been a successful day for them.

The Stage Entertainment had been well received with crowds around the stage area most of the day. We had positive feedback from the performers who enjoyed the experience/ atmosphere and are eager to be involved at the Christmas event.

Both the Mayor and Clerk had written to the Events team thanking them for all their hard work in ensuring a successful event.

The Mayor also reported plans are well in hand for both Remembrance Day Service and Concert

6. *Correspondence*

The following items of correspondence received since the last meeting, and all were noted –

C.C.B.C. Footfall figures – forwarded weekly to members for information

 Parking Enforcement Data – forwarded to members for information

Area	PCN's issued 1st Jan – 31st March 2023
Bargoed	408
Blackwood	386
Caerphilly	634
Risca	167
Ystrad Mynach	329

 Consultation on Flood Risk Management Strategy – forwarded to members
 Consultation ends 28th July

 Information on new Safety Wardens for the area

I am writing to you all to inform you that myself CSW102 Liam Smith and my colleague CSW108 Anthony Edwards are the new wardens for your area, I have already had contact with a number of yourselves and hope to continue to provide support going forward for you all and if you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact us via the below emails.

Smithl8@caerphilly.gov.uk

edwaraj@caerphilly.gov.uk

However if there are issues in your areas that you would like us to attend, can you please email in to the Safer Caerphilly Hub as all issues still need to be logged there for admin purposes, also please ensure that in this case that Gwent police is also contacted via 999 for emergencies, 101 for non-emergencies, alternatively you can contact them via the Gwent police Facebook or Twitter pages and also Contact@gwent.police.uk

 Invitation to Placemaking Plan Workshop at 5.00pm Friday 7th. July at Stute

Roger Evans Freedom of Information Request – to identify the wards that each member lives in. Responded same day. Summary of Info. as follows –

2 Cefn Fforest & Pengam
1 Newbridge
5 Blackwood
5 Penmaen
1 Pontllanfraith

Geraint Parker Request that Pride be allowed to hold an event & March in Blackwood
Forwarded to Borough and Pride notified of same

One Voice Wales Training Events for July – forwarded to members

Notification of RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly Area Committee Meeting to be held online on Wednesday 19th. July .
All papers forwarded to Cllr. Kirsty Williams as Council's new Representative

Ins. Oliver Petty Notification of Catch Up Meeting – 6.00pm. 19th. July

Cathy Thayer As far as I am aware, cannabis is an illegal drug still in the UK.. Can you please explain to me why there are at least 3 shops on the high street with their windows full of bongos!! The colourful display obviously attracts the attention of youngsters!
I would appreciate an answer back, as Blackwood is losing it's family friendly appeal!
Forwarded to C.C.B.C. and Town Centre Officer & Trading Standards have been asked to investigate and report back. Mrs Thayer has been informed

Blackwood Cricket Club Request for Financial Assistance -

In previous years the Council have given us a grant which is always appreciated and put to good use. We are pleased that we are getting over Covid with the Ladies and Juniors going from strength to strength with the Ladies playing in Festivals most Sundays in addition to some mid-week games.

Our ground is covered on Tuesday evenings with children of all ages and it is wonderful to see the numbers involved and is a credit to all those involved.

In addition, from January we run a Welcome Hub scheme with support from CCBC , this has now been extended to include the youngsters who receive a drink and warm food after their practise.

It would be good if you could arrange for some councillors to pop in to see the numbers involved and the effort put in by these volunteers to support the local community.

In addition, we continue to run three senior sides and am delighted to say we haven't had to concede a game for lack of numbers for a number of years as juniors are coming through the system.

Blackwood Bowls Club

Request for Financial Assistance -

We've recently engaged with a third party commercial waste collection company. Previously we have been just sending ALL waste to landfill which just did not sit well with me. The majority of our waste are recyclable items from the bar, e.g. cans, bottles, cardboard, so a committee decision was made a few weeks ago to start recycling properly. Whilst the collection company will collect both general waste and recycling, in separate large external bins, we need to update our internal refuse collection bins to make it easier to ensure that the right waste is going in the right bin. That brings us therefore to our small grants application. As far as urgency is concerned, our new waste disposal contract starts later this month. It would be great to have the internal bins in place by then but we also understand that these things don't happen overnight. As far as costs are concerned I've based the £400 on prices quoted by a UK company ([recyclingbins.co.uk](https://www.recyclingbins.co.uk)) which includes 4 X 90L General Waste and 4 X 90L Mixed Recycling internal bins. Total cost is £419.42. I've attached the link to the shopping cart (<https://www.recyclingbins.co.uk/checkout/cart/>).

* Various correspondence relating to the Beach Party

Given that the Applications for Financial Assistance would usually go to Policy & Finance and then to Council, and that the next Council meeting is not scheduled until September, the Mayor proposed these applications if possible be determined this evening and this was agreed by members.

Cllr. A Farina-Childs declared a personal interest, as did Cllr C Clarke on the Blackwood Bowls Club and neither took part in the debate or decision making on this request.

After some discussion it was **agreed** a grant of £250 be awarded to Blackwood Cricket Club in support of their continued impressive work with the junior teams. Furthermore members felt they should take up the Clubs invitation to visit the ground on a Tuesday evening to witness first hand the work being undertaken by the coaches and the Clerk agreed to arrange a date and circulate to members.

With regard the application from the Bowls Club, members had some issues regarding funding recycling bins, and it was **agreed** this be deferred until further information is received

7. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented his report on payments made /due for payment –

	£. p
George Edwards Mayors Allowance	500.00
Andrew Jervis Internal Audit Fee	120.00
Cherry Ripe Management Artists Fee Beach Party (incl £200.00 VAT)	1,200.00
Hampshire Flag Co. New bunting (incl. £ 129.30 VAT)	775.80
• Subsequent refund of £47.40 (incl. £7.90 VAT) – net cost £607	
George Edwards Expenses - British Legion Visit to Belgium	657.72
Cefn Glas Residents Assoc. Financial Assistance	300.00
SSAFA Wales Region Fund Financial Assistance	100.00
John Hold June Salary & reimbursements	1,106.70
HMRC June Tax/N.I.	318.27
Playworks June Fee	20.00
DYT Performance Beach Party	150.00
KLA Dance Performance Beach Party	100.00
Mynyddislwyn Ladies Choir Performance Beach Party	100.00
Studio 54 Performance Beach Party plus Disney characters	900.00
Atomic Sound Staging & Sound – Beach Party	1,300.00
He also reported verbally on an invoice received since preparation of the report namely	
Elsbury Install/ take down Bunting (incl. £80.00 VAT)	480.00

All payments were *agreed*

8. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held 12th. June 2023*

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

9. *Matters Arising*

The Clerk reported that the Annual Statement together with requested supplementary information had been forwarded to Wales Audit by the required deadline.

He also reported that due to time constraints he had not been able to arrange a Policy & Finance Committee meeting, but would look to arrange same during the coming weeks. He did, however, with members agreement propose to hold a Special Meeting of Town Council to discuss the Bus Station Toilets issue.

This was unanimously *agreed* and the meeting was scheduled for Monday next 17th. July at 6.30pm.

10. *Verbal Report on Beach Party*

Included in Mayors Announcements

11. *Publication of Members Remuneration 2022/2023*

The Clerk presented his report, which informed members that Section 151 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 authorises the Independent Remuneration Panel to set the requirements for the publication of remuneration of community and town council members. In the interests of transparency, the Panel, in its Annual Reports, has made it clear that community and town councils must publish their statement of payments by the 30 September following the previous financial year. This includes nil returns. It must do so in a form that is easily accessible to members of the public. A copy of the statement of payments and or a link to its publication must also be sent to the Panel by the same date. Failure to do this is non-compliant with the regulation.

He presented this years Statement, which would now be placed on the Notice Board, Website and forwarded to the Panel. This was *agreed* by members

STATEMENT OF PAYMENTS MADE TO MEMBERS OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31ST. MARCH 2023

Councillor Name	Payments for Costs incurred In respect of Telephones etc. Max. £150 per Member	Responsibility Payment (up to £500 to a maximum of 5 members)	Mayor/Deputy Mayor Allowance	Financial Loss Allowance	Travel/ Subsistence Allowance	Care Allowance (up to a max of £403 per member per month)	Other	TOTAL
	£. p		£. p		£. p			£. p
George Edwards	150.00		500.00		216.40			866.40
Kevin Etheridge	120.00							120.00
Kirsty Williams	131.50							131.50
Arthur Bradfield	131.50							131.50
Carol Erasmus	150.00							150.00
	683.00		500.00		216.40			1,399.40

12. *Proposed Revision to our Existing Financial Regulations regarding Contract Tender Limits as an Interim measure until the Model Standing Orders/Financial Regulations are adopted by Council*

The Clerk presented his report, which looked to review the existing limits within Financial Regulations regarding Contract Tender limits. Whilst members have agreed that the Policy & Finance Committee will over the coming month or so, be looking to recommend adoption of the Model Standing Orders and Financial Regulations to Town Council, he felt it important the existing limit of £2,000 be revised as an interim measure to better reflect the current financial climate, and safeguard Town Council should we need to consider any works in the near future.

Having, discussed this with the Mayor, the Clerk respectfully suggested we consider reviewing the existing limits within the Financial Regulations regarding entering into Contracts,

(b) Where it is intended to enter into a contract:

- (i) exceeding £2,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk shall invite tenders from at least three firms.
- (ii) for expenditure of £2,000 or less in value, the Mayor or the Chairman of the Committee or the appointed deputy together with the Clerk shall have executive powers.

to, as an Interim level of say £11,000 (until the Model Standing Orders & Financial Regulations are examined by Policy & Finance Committee and referred back to Town Council for adoption.) to better reflect current financial trends.

This was unanimously *agreed* by members

13. Blackwood in Bloom

The Clerk reported that this competition relies on members identifying 6 front gardens (visible from the public highway) within their respective wards, to be judged soon afterwards by members of the Events Committee.

For this to be successful, it is necessary for members to play their part in the process, which means some time & effort is given touring their wards and identifying the best front gardens on view. Members in each ward should confer and agree on the nominations.

If members wish to proceed with the competition, each of the 4 wards should identify their nominations and forward to the Clerk by 31st. July and he will then arrange judging to take place early the following week.

Prior to Covid, Certificates & prize money of £25 were presented to winners at the Civic Awards Evening held at the Blackwood Miners Institute, and it is hoped this can be repeated during the current year, with presentations also being made to previous years winners.

The Clerk also suggested that instead of £25 cash payments (frowned upon by Audit) that perhaps we present £25 Vouchers for perhaps Blackwood Garden Centre thus supporting a local company albeit in a small way.

This was *agreed* by members.

The Mayor urged all members to ply their part and not just leave it to usual few.

14. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received since the last meeting. All had been forwarded to members for their information -

Case Ref. 23/0388/COU

Location: 193 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AA

Proposal: Change the use from commercial storage to 2 No. residential flats

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

Case Ref. 23/0393/FULL

Location: The Jays 13 Ladysmith Road Blackwood NP12 1DJ

Proposal: Demolish existing dwelling and erect new detached dwelling

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

Case Ref. 23/0407/OUT

Location: Land At Newlyn Lon Pennant Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1BR

Proposal: Erect single detached dwelling

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

Case Ref. 23/0432/TPO

Location: 2 Llwyn Coed Blackwood NP12 1FT

Proposal: Crown reduction of T1 Oak Tree, 1.5 metres back to suitable live growth points

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

After some discussion it was ***agreed*** no objections be raised

15. Reports

There were no additional reports