

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4TH. SEPTEMBER 2023

Present: Cllr. G Edwards (Mayor)
Cllr. R Mills (Deputy Mayor)
Cllrs. K Etheridge, K Williams, C Clark, D Davies, A Short, C Erasmus, R Mills, N Dix, K Jones,
A Farina-Childs & D Box
Cllr. M Gwynne arrived late

Also Present representing Gwent Police Adrian Popa & P.C. Ben Yuille
Also W.L.F. Baber

Prior to the start of the meeting Mr. Baber outlined a specific problem the local Royal British Legion had regarding the storage of various branch assets, and asked if Town Council could assist in temporary storage of same. Members queried the amount in question, and after a short discussion Cllrs. G Edwards & A Short offered to do what they could and asked Mr. Baber to make contact the next day.

Mr. Baber then informed members of an event being held by British Legion on 27th. October with tickets £25 per head and stated it would be nice to see Town Council presence on the night.

Mr. Baber thanked the Mayor for Town Council's indulgence and the assistance offered, and left the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr.N Nyle

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point

3. Police Report

The Officers gave a brief update on matters, identifying that whilst there had been a reduction in overall crime, there had been an increase in Anti Social Behaviour in town, with Mc.Donalds, ASDA & the Bus Station being the main hotspots.

Several Dispersal Orders had been issued and a police operation had been carried out at Mc.Donalds in an effort to identify the ringleaders causing both customers and staff ongoing grief.

Members voiced their ongoing concerns that certain parts of town are now being seen as no go areas by many residents and would be visitors, and that something must be done to curb this continued problem of ASB.

The Officers then highlighted the current problem of illegal parking on the High Street which was unanimously backed by members, with several highlighting specific issues of parking on pavements and double yellow lines, delivery lorries double parking causing chaos and vehicles undertaking three point turns.

The Officers proposed a Joint Operation/ Campaign with the Borough Council to try to tackle this ongoing problem, and suggested a joint message on Social Media giving fair warning of proposed crack- down in the High Street and nearby streets.

Members were in agreement with this proposal, and Borough members stated they would assist in trying to arrange same.

The Officers were thanked for their attendance and they left the meeting

4. County Borough Report

Borough Members gave an update on issues they had been dealing with, namely

Non collection of waste/ garden refuse – problems with vehicles and lack of crews had resulted in several instances of reporting to officers of collections not being made on the allocated days

Parking and other issues in the High Street already discussed

Anti Social Behaviour in Apollo Way & Bus Station fuelled by youngsters with drink – perhaps local shopkeepers should be reminded of their legal responsibilities.

Palmer Place residents were suffering major problems and increased police patrols had been requested.

Fly Tipping is becoming an issue in the area, especially it seems near some farms

The positioning of the Skate Park at the Show Field has changed again, with it now planned for nearer the Outdoor Gym Area – most recent proposal was apparently found to be too near to houses.

Members agreed this scheme had become a bit of an embarrassment with so many changes made over many years and still no real end in site.

No Council owned buildings, including schools, had concrete issues

Greater Blackwood Masterplan – This seemingly very important document had been circulated to Borough members, who had been requested to submit their responses within 10 days.

This Masterplan, which covers the wards of Blackwood, Cefn Fforest & Pengam, Crumlin, Maesycwmmmer, Pemaen & Pontllanfraith seeks to strengthen the economy and look to improve cultural, environmental and social conditions for residents and visitors alike.

Items identified relate to better use of Market Square, concentration on Night time economy, potential for railway station, improve/ develop heritage of the area, more town centre events to help increase footfall.

The Clerk reported that having been copied into the e mail to Borough members he queried why Town Council had not been consulted as was required by our Charter Agreement with CCBC, and why only 10 day consultation period.

The response received was that this masterplan will follow the procedures for the four other plans already adopted by the Borough. Each masterplan goes through an informal/ internal period of consultation before it becomes the subject of a larger consultation exercise. Early next year, a 6 week period of consultation will begin, and along with many other organisations, and the public, Town Council will be invited to comment on the document

5. *Mayoral Announcements*

The Mayor reported he was fairly well advanced with preparations for both the Remembrance Service on Sunday November 12th. and the Mayors Concert on Wednesday 22nd. November

6. *Correspondence*

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

Caerphilly C.B.C.

Footfall figures (forwarded to members)

News Online (forwarded to members)

Proposals for Parking restrictions – Greenwood Road
Following an onsite meeting re. safety concerns at the junction of Greenwood Road, Beaumaris Way & Addison Street it was considered that improved visibility could be achieved by the extension of the double yellow lines northwards along Greenwood Road thus improving road safety at the location

Notice of Reused Appeal Decision – Lewis Yard William Street

Notification of Blackwood Town Centre Stakeholder Event
6.00pm on 4th. October at Blackwood Miners Institute

Notification of Waste Strategy Launch (forwarded to members)

Survey on New Town Centre Management Model Pilot (forwarded)

Notification that following the retirement of the current School Crossing Patrol at Libanus, the required Assessment has concluded the site meets the requirements and that the post will be advertised

Notification of payment of 2nd. Instalment of Precept £29,599.10

One Voice Wales

Draft Minutes on OVW Area Committee held on 19th. July

Notification of Training Courses for September
(forwarded to members)

GAVO

Invitation to Mayor to attend Annual Volunteering Awards Ceremony on 29th. September at Blackwood Miners Institute and to present one of the prizes

Audit Wales

Request for supplementary information - supplied by return

Roger Evans

FOI Request regarding date of repayment of Interest Free Loan to Studio 54 – request met

7. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented his report identifying that the following payments had been made/ were due for payment -

		£. p
Elsburys	Beach Party Bunting	480.00
G Edwards	Subsistence Allowance	246.00
ABUHB	Defibrillator Cabinet	570.00
J Hold	July Salary & Reimbursements	1,046.48
HMRC	July Tax/NI	318.47
Playworks	July Fee	20.00
Blackwood Methodist	Room Hire (April to August)	190.00
J Hold	August Salary & Reimbursements	1,046.68
HMRC	August Tax/NI	318.27
Playworks	August Fee	20.00
B'wood Cricket Club	Financial Assistance	250.00

All payments were *unanimously agreed*

8. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 10th. July 2023*

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

9. *Matters Arising*

Cllr. K Williams asked if there had been any progress regarding laptops/tablets for members. The Mayor said he was still awaiting some information from certain potential suppliers.

Cllr. K Williams stated that she was conscious a number of important issues had been deferred to the Policy & Finance Committee, but due to the recess things had stalled, and suggested a meeting be called in the near future.

This was *agreed* by members

10. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Special Town Council Meeting held on 17th. July 2023*

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

11. *Matters Arising*

The Clerk queried whether the lease issue between C.C.B.C. & Caerphilly Taxi Driver Association had been resolved, and the Mayor informed him that it hadn't as yet.

12. Notice of Vacancy – Blackwood North Ward

Following the untimely death of our dear friend & colleague Arthur Bradfield, a vacancy exists in the Blackwood North Ward, and it is now proposed to advertise same.

A Notice of Vacancy must now 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.

The required Notice could now be posted on our Web Page and Notice Board, and we can wait for the statutory period to elapse to see if an Election to fill the final vacancy on Town Council is called or whether we can arrange to fill by Co-option.

The Clerk and Mayor reported that they had unsuccessfully tried to make contact with Cllr. Jacob Pearce regarding his lack of attendance since the Town Council meeting on 5th. April and/or contact with the Clerk or Mayor since then. The Clerk emailed again on 31st. August identifying that unless he attended this evening's he would in effect be out of compliance by the date of the next scheduled meeting 16th. October and unless he immediately sought leave of absence, identifying reasons for inability to attend he would forfeit his position on Town Council.

After some discussion, members **agreed** to defer advertising the Vacancy in the Blackwood North Ward until the Cllr. Pearce situation is resolved, and then if nothing changes, both vacancies could be advertised at the same time

13. Budget Monitoring Report - Period 4 Period ended 31st July 2023

The Clerk presented his report which was accepted by members, and noted there were no significant variations to budget.

Cllr. K. Etheridge queried the need for a budget for a Newsletter and wondered whether possible improvements to our Website and Face book page could provide the same information thereby saving on potential printing and delivery costs.

It was **agreed** this issue be deferred back to Policy & Finance Committee & Newsletter/Webpage Committee or consideration

14. Request from Blackwood R.F.C. for Town Council to consider sharing cost of replacement Alun Pask Memorial Bench at Cwmgelli

The Clerk reported on an approach from Blackwood R.F.C.

Blackwood RFC and the Town Council contributed to the wooden bench in memory of the late Alun Pask over 20 years ago and it is now starting to show its age despite it having been given due attention.

The Club proposes to replace this with a more durable memorial bench with less maintenance and the cost together with a suitable plaque will be some £500.

We are wondering if the Town Council would wish to make a contribution to the cost involved.

Regards

Bruce Penfold, Blackwood RFC Club President

The Clerk reminded members that Cllr. A Short had in the past assisted in the maintenance of the bench, but after 25+ years a new bench was badly needed.

After some discussion it was *unanimously agreed* that Town Council support this request that will help keep the memory alive of one of Wales all time great rugby heroes

14. Closure of Bus Passenger Waiting Area at Bus Station

Cllr. M Gwynne thanked the Clerk for placing this on the agenda, which had been prompted by several complaints passed to him. Whilst accepting the Toilets and the Café were now closed, he was concerned that with the colder weather approaching, people would have to wait outside and be open to the elements.

Cllrs. G. Edwards & A .Short shared their experiences over the past months of the wanton damage and mess caused by individuals in and around the bus station that they had assisted in cleaning on a regular basis. Their view, which was shared by many others was that the waiting room area was not a safe environment for anyone waiting for a bus, and that until the situation improves significantly the only realistic option is for the waiting room area to remain closed.

Following the members description of what had been happening, and the potential health hazards associated with same, Cllr. N. Dix stated that if he was notified of similar instances occurring in the future he would ask for the Bus Station to be closed temporarily in the hope this would necessitate the Borough Council and partner agencies into taking the matter more seriously and deal with the issues.

15. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received since the last meeting, and after some discussion it was agreed no objections be raised -

Case Ref. 23/0490/HH

Location: 107 Beaumaris Way Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1DQ

Proposal: Erect double storey side extension and single to rear of dwelling

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

Case Ref. 23/0574/TPO

Location: 11 Lon Pennant, Cwmgelli, Blackwood NP12

Proposal: Thin the crown of beech treeT1 by 15% with removal of dead wood and smaller branches incl. branch on left of tree at about 5m (TPO 2/82/IBC)

Case Officer: Abbie Jane Stokes 07907 574195 planning@ Caerphilly.gov.uk

16. Reports

The Mayor reported that the new defibrillator cabinet had been delivered and would be fixed during the coming week.

He raised the possibility of an additional defibrillator being purchased specifically for the Bus Station. Some members had concerns regarding it being a target for vandalism and its close proximity to an existing machine at the entrance to the Precinct.

After some discussion it was agreed the Clerk make contact with June Thomas (Jacks Appeal) and enquire if she could assist

17. Date of next Meeting

The Clerk reminded members that to accommodate his holiday arrangements, they had previously agreed that the October meeting be held on Monday October 16th.