

**DRAFT**

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON  
19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2023**

Present : Cllr. G Edwards- Etheridge ( Mayor )

Cllrs. D Box, K Etheridge, K Williams, K Jones, C Clark, M Gwynne & C Erasmus

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllrs. A Farina-Childs, N Dix, A Short.  
Late Apologies received from Cllr. R Mills

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest made

**3. Update Report on Office Accommodation**

The Mayor & Clerk gave a brief update to members on the issues raised at the November meeting.

In respect of requested Fire Risk Assessment, this was arranged by the owners and undertaken by Blackwood Fire ,with minor issues attended to including replacement of fire extinguishers at a cost of £600

A Legionella Risk Assessment was carried out with nothing detected

A Review of the Electrics were undertaken, which has resulted in a New Fuse Board being installed together with some new sockets, earth bonding where necessary and renewed Emergency lighting. An Electrical Certificate has now been issued on the property.

The Lease ( £800 per month ) was currently being drawn up, the cost of which, estimated at £1,250 would be Town Council's responsibility, and it was unanimously agreed payment be made once requested.

It is anticipated the lease will commence 1<sup>st</sup>. January 2024 with no rent increase for the first 3 years, with break clauses as identified previously ie. 2 year break clause with additional break clauses inline with Town Council election periods.

It was suggested that perhaps copies of the lease be forwarded to members for their perusal

Members were informed that 3 quotations would be now be sought from Office Furniture Companies and for a small kitchen installation with Policy & Finance Committee to oversee both projects.

The Mayor stated that he hoped the offices might be operational from March/ April.

The Clerk reported that having seen the report on the closure of Barclays Bank in Blackwood he had made contact offering the new offices as a potential site for their planned hub in the town. He had received a promising response and was looking to set up a site meeting with the current manager overseeing the closure to check the suitability for their requirements.

He reported that he had also contacted Caerphilly CAB to enquire possible outreach at the offices, but had received no response.

Cllr D Box reported possible interest from the Samaritans time/ a presence at the offices.

The Mayor said he was encouraged at the possible interest and that we would need to follow up on these and other possible groups early in the new year, whilst pointing out that we might need to consider magnetic locks being fitted to some of the internal doors to guarantee security/ confidentiality.

The Mayor reported that he hoped all tablets/laptops would be ready to hand over to members at the January meeting, and suggested covers be purchased for the tablets to alleviate potential damage to the screens at an approx cost of £12 per cover, and this was unanimously agreed by members. It was also agreed that the January meeting start at the earlier time of 6.00pm. to facilitate hand over etc.

The Clerk took the opportunity to remind members that the first meeting of the new year would be held on Monday January 8<sup>th</sup>., with the February meeting scheduled for Monday February 5<sup>th</sup>. when the Precept would need to be decided.

With that in mind he proposed the Policy & Finance Committee would be held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup>. January, thereby giving time for a further additional meeting if required.

The Mayor pointed out that with the resignation of Cllr. Noah Nyle there was a vacancy on the Policy & Finance Committee and with such important upcoming business proposed we fill the said vacancy nominating Cllr. Cathrine Clark, this was seconded by Cllr. M Gwynne and unanimously agreed