

DRAFT

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON 20TH. MAY 2024**

Present : Cllr. G Edwards Etheridge (Mayor)

Cllr. R Mills (Deputy Mayor)

Cllrs. K Jones, C Clark, N Dix, A Farina-Childs, D Davies, K Williams, D Box, C Erasmus,
K Etheridge & A Short

Cllrs. P Cook & M Gwynne arrived late at approx 6.30pm & therefore took no part in Election of Mayor or Deputy Mayor

1. To Receive Apologies for Absence

No Apologies had been received

2. To Elect a Mayor & Receive Mayor's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Nominations were invited

Cllr. G Edwards Etheridge was proposed by Cllr. C Clark and seconded by Cllr. D Box, and Cllr. R Mills nominated by Cllr. C Erasmus and seconded by Cllr.A Short.

After a secret ballot, the Clerk reported it was a tie.

It was agreed both nominees would draw lots, which resulted in Cllr. R Mills being successful Cllr. Mills, having then signed the necessary Declaration of Acceptance of Office, thanked members for the honour bestowed upon him and took the Chair

3. To Elect a Deputy Mayor & Receive Deputy Mayor's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Nominations were invited.

Cllr. G Edwards Etheridge was proposed by Cllr. C Clark & seconded by Cllr.D Box and Cllr. A Short was nominated by Cllr. C Erasmus and seconded by Cllr K Jones

After a secret ballot the Clerk reported Cllr G Edwards Etheridge had been elected and he then signed the necessary Declaration of Acceptance of Office

4. Declarations of Interest

Cllr. C Clark Declared an Interest in Item 16 Applications for Financial Assistance being a Member of the Blackwood Little Theatre

5. Outgoing Mayoral Report

Prior to the Outgoing Mayoral Report, the new Mayor wished to place on record his and Town Council's thanks and appreciation for his exceptional work and commitment over the past 2 years, especially the way he almost single handed delivered Remembrance Day Services of which the Town can be very proud, and his vision and dedication in ensuring we are now meeting in our own dedicated Offices. Members echoed these sentiments.

The Clerk also took the opportunity of thanking the past Mayor for all his support and assistance over the past two years and reiterated that without his determination and drive, we would not be meeting in the Offices his evening

Cllr. Edwards Etheridge admitted it had been a very busy and challenging couple of years but that he had enjoyed his term of Office, and what he had achieved, whilst stating there was still much to do to increase the profile of Town Council

6. To Nominate Members to the following –

The Mayor requested members to indicate their interests/preferences to serve on the following Committees, and after some discussion it was *agreed* the Committee representation be as follows –

(a) Finance & Policy Committee

Councillors R Mills, D Davies, K Williams, N Dix, C Erasmus, D Box & C Clark

(b) Planning & Licensing Committee

Councillors K Jones, C Clark, A Short, K Williams & D Box

(c) Environment Committee

Councillors D Davies, A Farina-Childs, K Williams M Gwynne & N Dix

(d) Newsletter/Web Page Committee

Councillors D Box, K Williams, C Clark

(e) Twinning Committee

This Committee is open to all members

(f) Events Committee

This is an advisory Committee, that the Town Council has delegated the role of managing the agreed budget. It is open to all members of the Council.

(g) Co-option Interview Committee

Councillors C Erasmus, R Mills, K Williams, K Etheridge & C Clark

(h) Appraisal Sub-Committee

It was *agreed* this be left until a later date

7. To Review & Approve Committee Terms of Reference

The Clerk presented his Report, and after a short discussion it was *agreed* the Committee Terms of Reference be approved

8. To Nominate Members to the following –

Again the Mayor requested members to indicate an interest in representing Town Council on the following outside bodies and after some discussion the following representation was **agreed**

(a) Town & Community Council Joint Liaison Committee

Councillors G Edwards Etheridge & K Etheridge

(b) C.C.B.C. Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee

Councillor G Edwards Etheridge with K Etheridge as Deputy

(c) Blackwood Town Centre Management Group

Councillors G Edwards Etheridge & A Short

(d) Retail Partnership Group

Councillors G Edwards Etheridge & A Short

(e) After Hours/ Night time Economy Group / Bus Station Multi Agency Group

Councillors G Edwards Etheridge & A Short

(f) One Voice Wales Area Committee & Larger Councils Committee

Councillor C Clark

(g) Plas Mawr Community Centre Committee

Agreed to leave vacant

9. To Confirm Provisional Dates & Times of Future Council Meetings & Method of Notification

The Clerk presented his report, and after some discussion, the following dates of future Town Council meetings were provisionally **agreed**

10th. June 2024

1st. July 2024

2nd. September 2024

7th. October 2024

4th. November 2024

2nd. December 2024

6th. January 2025

3rd. February 2025

3rd. March 2025

7th. April 2025

12th. May 2025 (Annual General Meeting & Ordinary Meeting)

It was further agreed that the meetings be held at the Blackwood Town Council Offices, with remote access via Microsoft Teams if required.

Furthermore, that meetings start at 6.30 p.m. and notification of meetings, Agendas, Minutes and Reports continue to be forwarded via e mail.

10. Independent Review Panel Annual Report - Formal Decisions required

The Clerk presented his report, and each optional element was considered in turn. After some discussion the following decisions were *unanimously agreed*

The payment for up to 3 members undertaking a senior role at an annual amount of £500 – *agreed this optional payment is not implemented*

Community and town councils can make payments to each of their members in respect of travel costs for attending approved duties - *agreed in principle* that such payments be implemented

If a community or town council resolves that a particular duty requires an overnight stay, it can authorise reimbursement of subsistence expenses to its members - *agreed in principle* that such payments be implemented

Community and town councils can pay financial loss compensation to each of their members, where such loss has actually occurred, for attending approved duties - *agreed in principle* that such payments be implemented

Each council can decide to introduce an attendance allowance for members. The amount of each payment must not exceed £30 - *agreed this optional payment is not implemented*

Community and town councils can provide a payment to the mayor or chair of the council up to a maximum of £1,500 - *agreed that the current allowance be £500*

Community and town councils can provide a payment to the deputy mayor or deputy chair of the council up to a maximum of £500 - *agreed this optional payment is not implemented*

11. County Borough Report

County members gave a brief update regarding ongoing issues, namely –

Drainage problems at Cwmgelli continue to take up considerable time. An FOI request confirms what appear to be a catalogue of failures/ errors by Borough officers, and the Ombudsman is now involved. A further meeting with residents is scheduled for 7th. June

A Licence Application in respect of the Texaco Garage had initially requested 24hour sale of alcohol, but after objection it has been granted a licence from 6.00am till midnight.

A 405 signature petition in respect of School Crossing Patrol at Blackwood Junior School has led to a re-evaluation which has concluded one is needed.

Continued problems with illegal parking on the High Street and vehicles undertaking 3 point turns on a Pelican Crossing. Police & CCBC officers informed.

12. *Correspondence*

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

Caerphilly C.B.C.	News Online	Forwarded to members
	Footfall figures	Forwarded to members
	Notification of change of date for Community Council Liaison Sub Committee from April to 29 th . May and subsequently until July	
	Notification of payment of 1 st instalment of Precept £40,382.93	
	Town Centre Management Team – Update Town Centre Audit	
	Request completion of Survey – Caerphilly Conversation on website - includes a number of questions relevant to town centres and the High Street	
One Voice Wales	Notification of Training Opportunities - Forwarded to members	
	Draft Minutes of RCT/Merthyr & Caerphilly Area Committee	
	Copy of New Model Contract of Employment	
	Members Allowances - Proposed Timetable of Actions	
	Pre Election Period – Proposed Timetable of Actions	
Boundary Commission	Review of Community Arrangements of the County Borough of Caerphilly - Forwarded to members – no changes for Blackwood regards County Cllr. or Town Cllr. representation	

The Clerk also reported on letter from A.P Jervis Internal Auditor together with his Report which confirmed he had undertaken the Annual Audit and that the Accounts were a true, accurate and fair representation of the Town Councils activities – Fee £120

13. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented his report on payments made/ due for payment, together with a verbal update on additional payments over the past few days to ensure the Office was ready for use, and all were agreed

		£. p
One Voice Wales	Annual Subscription	1,513.00
John Hold	April Salary/ Reimbursements	828.69
HMRC	April Tax/N.I.	605.65
Playworks	April Fee	20.00
Fusion Electrics	New Electric points/wiring	497.31
Caerphilly C.B.C.	N.N.D.R. to March 2024	1,463.21
Mark Butler	Fitting Kitchen/ Plumbing works	1,280.00
Bebb Tasker & Sucksmith	Lease Payment	960.00
Monster Group	Metal Post Box (Incl. VAT £29.10)	174.59
Dragon Blinds	Supply & fit Blinds	500.00
A. Jervis	Fee – Internal Audit	120.00
ASDA	Kettle/toaster misc.	97.80
Sainsbury's	Hoover	160.00
Curry's	Microwave/ T.V. (Incl. VAT £55.65)	333.99
Curry's	T.V. for Microsoft Teams (Incl. VAT £98.33)	589.97
Curry's	Office Printer (Incl. VAT £55.85)	334.99
B & Q	Yale Locks etc.	78.10
Tool Station	T.V. wall bracket	33.98
Einfinity	Teams Room System (Incl. VAT £570.00)	3,420.00
Note Top Office	Furniture (Incl. VAT £262.20)	1,573.00
Blackwood CCTV	Installation of CCTV	1,215.00
Amazon	Ethernet Cables (Incl. VAT £25.36)	152.11

14. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held 8th. April 2024*

The Clerk apologised for some errors identifying those present at the meeting – C Pearce should read C Clark and D Davies should replace P Cook (listed twice).

Accepting these amendments it was **resolved** the minutes be approved as a true record

15. *Matters Arising*

Cllr. D Davies reminded members of the Invitation to the 80th. Anniversary of the D Day Landings Service of Remembrance being held 10.30am on Thursday 6th. June at Cefn Fforest Cenotaph.
Cllr A Short volunteered to attend on behalf of Town Council and lay wreath.

16. Applications for Financial Assistance

Cllr. C Clark had declared her interest in the Application from and took no part in the discussion or decision making in respect of same

The Clerk presented his report on Applications received, and each was considered in turn.

Blackwood Little Theatre

After some discussion and bearing in mind no Grant had been requested since 2016, it was proposed by Cllr N Dix seconded by Cllr. A Farina-Childs and ***unanimously agreed*** a Grant of £1,095 be awarded to enable replacement of Front Curtain Track.

Blackwood Branch Royal British Legion

Since no proper accounts had been provided in support of this application it was proposed by Cllr. G Edwards Etheridge seconded by Cllr M Gwynne and ***unanimously agreed*** to leave consideration until such information is available

Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod

After some discussion, it was proposed by Cllr. R Mills seconded by Cllr G Edwards Etheridge and ***unanimously agreed*** no Grant be awarded

Mayors Charity

As has become custom and practice, it was ***unanimously agreed*** a Grant of £250 be awarded

17. Financial Accounts 2023/2024 together with Internal Audit Report & Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st. March 2024

The Clerk presented the Annual Accounts, together with an Explanation of Variances between 2023/24 & 2022/23 and Copy of Bank Reconciliation.

He explained that the figures shown in the Accounting Statements were based on the figures contained in the Annual Accounts, and having had the opportunity to compare both members satisfied themselves all was in order, and it was ***resolved*** the Accounting Statement be approved and accepted.

Members then turned their attention to the Annual Governance Statements and considered each in turn.

After some discussion, members were confident that Statements 1-8 could be answered positively whilst Statement 9 was not applicable. The Annual Governance Statement was therefore ***approved and accepted***.

Members then received the Annual Internal Audit Report and after a brief discussion ***resolved it be approved and accepted***

The Annual Return will now be signed by the Mayor on behalf of Town Council and submitted to the external auditors together with any supplementary information requested.

The necessary Notice of Appointment of Date for the Exercise of Electors Rights will be posted on our Web Page and Notice board as directed by Audit Wales

18. To consider Draft Annual Report for 2023/24

The Clerk presented his report, which had been circulated to members and asked that special consideration be given to members identifying what they consider their Priorities are for this current year. After some discussion it was *agreed* members consider same and that the Report be referred to Policy & Finance Committee

19. New Offices / Staffing – Update

The Clerk re-iterated that due to the hard work and perseverance of the past Mayor the Offices should be open from June. Positive discussions have been held with HSBC & Sight Cymru, with the Bank looking to use our offices for 1 day per month (Tuesday 10.00am – 3.00pm) & Sight Cymru to use for their approx. fortnightly meetings (Monday 10.30 am – 12.00)

Given the relatively short periods involved, there will be no charge at present.

Discussions have also been held with Caerphilly CAB, and once the additional advisors have been trained, they will have a presence in the Office.

Now the Offices are complete, it is hoped to attract other organisations to make use of the space available.

The Clerk had circulated the proposed Job Advertisement for Assistant Clerk and after a short discussion it was agreed the Clerk, Mayor & Chair of Policy & Finance Committee have delegated authority to arrange for Advertisement to be forwarded to Caerphilly C.B.C. & One Voice Wales and ask to circulate, whilst also consider use of Press

20. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on planning applications received since the last meeting -

Case Ref. 24/0244/COU

Location: 2 Gorseland Cliff Road Blackwood NP12 0NT

Proposal: Convert two flats into single dwelling and garage

Case Officer: Joe Simmons (01443 864428 : simmoj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 24/0266/FULL

Location: 91 - 93 High Street Blackwood NP12 1PN

Proposal: Install new signage, new shop front and extraction ductwork to the rear

Case Officer: Joe Simmons (01443 864428 : simmoj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 24/0267/ADV

Location: 91 - 93 High Street Blackwood NP12 1PN

Proposal: Erect di-bond fascia sign and hanging sign

Case Officer: Joe Simmons (01443 864428 : simmoj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 23/0782/COU

Location: 113 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AD

Proposal: Change the use of 1 No. Two Bed Apartment to 2 No. Studio Apartments on first floor and retain ground floor as retail and basement as studio apartment

Case Officer: Joe Simmons (01443 864428 : simmoj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 24/0308/FULL

Location: Car Park At Grid Ref 317301 197037 Bus Station Road Blackwood

Proposal: Redevelop part of a surface level car park to provide residential development, access, drainage, landscaping and associated works

Case Officer: Elizabeth Rowley (01443 864776 : rowlee@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 24/0332/HH

Location: 4 Lilian Road Blackwood NP12 1DN

Proposal: Convert existing basement and erect rear extension

Case Officer: Joe Simmons (01443 864428 : simmoj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

After some discussion it was **agreed** no objections be raised albeit it was also **agreed** to recommend to the Borough that with regard change of use applications for apartments (Case Ref 23/0782/COU) and any similar future applications, special consideration be given to the allocation of sufficient space for possible additional recycling bins provision

21. Reports

There were no reports