

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7TH. APRIL 2025

Present: Cllr R Mills (Mayor)

Cllr. G Etheridge (Deputy Mayor)

Cllrs. J Griffiths, C Erasmus ,P Cook, A Farina- Childs, D Davies, K Etheridge N Dix, C Clark,
K Williams, K Jones & M Gwynne

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllrs. L Phillips, D Box & A Short

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this time

3. Police Report

There were no Officers in attendance

4. County Borough Report

Cllrs. K Etheridge, N Dix & A Farina-Childs gave a brief update on the following issues –

There was a meeting being held with ward members on 15th. April regarding Welsh Govt. Loan monies (interest rates approx 2%) and how that might benefit the town. Representation had been requested for Town Council to be present but refused. Now referring request to Chief Exec. quoting Charter Agreement.

The entrance to Mayhill bungalows continues to be a problem, with several residents claiming ownership of part of the land. A letter to the Chief Exec. is requesting clarification on this and other issues.

Blackwood Miners Institute and potential new trustees was raised with apparently Steve Reynolds (Maxime Cinema showing an interest)

At the Cwmgelli development, hedgerows have been taken out without any consultation and no consideration for the environment, nesting birds and other wildlife. This after years of flooding, noise, dust and general nuisance is further addition to the ever growing list of local residents complaints. The Planning Department have been notified and asked to investigate any potential planning breaches

5. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor reported that due to family illness commitments it had been a quiet time regards visits/ engagements, but he had walked the town and called on several businesses to check for any particular issues

6. Correspondence

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

Caerphilly C.B.C.

Proposed removal of parklets & Double yellow lines & replace with Disabled bay – High Street

Footfall figures

Planned Removal of telephone box at Bloomfield Road by B.T. – Consultation ends 8th. June

News Online

Request for Nominations from TCC's for Standards Committee
Representation Confirmation from majority of members in support of Cllr. G Etheridge being our nomination

Reminder of Blackwood Stakeholder Meeting at 6.00pm on Thurs. 20th. March @ The Talking Shop

Notification that planned TCCLC meeting for Monday 28th. April be postponed – response from Officers to outcome of consultation on CCBC plans for Libraries & Leisure Centres will not be ready in time

Community to Commemorate 80th. Anniversary of VE Day – residents across the borough being encouraged to come together and inviting applications for street closures free of charge to hold parties on Bank Holiday Monday 5th.June

Letter confirming feedback we had verbally received from tutors and students alike, that our Offices are a great resource for training courses organised by the Engagement Officer for the County Borough, and with the recent announcement of significant investment to assist training opportunities will be planning new courses from May.
Would recommend that daily rate for hire increase from £50 to £70 from 1st. April to be reviewed annually

Confirmation CIL monies could be used for potential purchase/installation of surveillance cameras at Skateboard park, but not for ongoing operational costs

Cllr D Box

On behalf of CHAMPS for use of Offices on 3rd.Saturday of each month 10.30am – 12.30pm

One Voice Wales

Notification that remote AGM planned for 11th. March postponed due to lack of Numbers

Notification of National Awards Conference to be held 30th. April @ Hafod Y Hendre, Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd

New Digital Guidance

Launch of new OVW website

Wales & VE Day Celebrations 8th. May 2025

Cllr D Davies	Invitation to members of Re-launch of Caerphilly Over 50's Forum 28 th . March 1.00pm – 4.00pm at Cefn Fforest Community Centre
Wales Audit	Details of Requirements for Full Audit 2024/2025 Internal Auditor & RFO to complete and Town Council to approve Annual Return by 30 th June Display Audit Notice on Noticeboard & Website by 16 th . June Make arrangements for public to inspect accounts from 1 st July to 28 th . July Send Annual Return & all requested information by 8 th . August
Senedd (Welsh Govt.)	Role of Governance & Accountability of the Community & Town Council's Sector – will forward to members
Skateboard Academy	Offer of skateboarding workshops – costs £90 per hour + VAT, all equipment provided and sessions usually run on flat open spaces or skateboard parks for up to 12 learners per hour
Mr & Mrs Mason	Request for Mayor (Borough) to attend to help celebrate Diamond Wedding of Arthur & Pat Jenkins of Cardigan Way Grove Park Message passed to Borough & visit organised together with bouquet on behalf of Town Council
Miscellaneous Correspondence relating to Job Advert/ Applications for Clerk/RFO	
Miscellaneous Correspondence relating to Bank Details for payment of Contribution to Members Expenses	
In respect of the letter from the County Borough Engagement Officer and use of the Offices, the Clerk reported that £675 income had been received for hire of rooms since December. Members also agreed to the proposed increase to £70 per day hire from 1 st . April. The Deputy Mayor reported that he had received a letter expressing possible interest in hiring from a Neurodiversity Group via NHS and was arranging to meet representatives at the Offices.	
In respect of the request from CHAMPS, members agreed the use of the Offices on Saturdays	
The Deputy Mayor then reported on an email received from the CCBC Events Team suggesting perhaps for the upcoming Beach Party we do away with the stage, but keep a performance area adjacent to the old Argos shop for dance/ choir entertainment and supplement that with 2 or 3 busking tents (which proved popular at the recent Spring Fair) throughout the High Street, and that the budget be transferred over to them to manage. Whilst some members thought this worthy of consideration, others and the Clerk queried whether on that basis there would be any involvement from local dance/ theatre groups and choirs which has been a mainstay over the years. After some further discussion it was agreed to do without a stage, but at this point consider retaining £3,000 for entertainment to be organised in house – local groups and others, whilst also allowing for potential sound system requirements.	

7. *Schedule of Payments*

The Clerk presented his report on payments made/due for payment, and all were *unanimously agreed*

		£. p
GWR	Rail fare – Members expenses	149.80
Amazon	Office signage	8.99
United Graphic Design	Web Hosting Fee	199.62
British Gas	Gas Charges	547.44
British Gas	Electricity Charges	132.83
J P Fulton	Photographer Fees	200.00
Woolleys Florist	Flowers 60 th Anniversary	40.00
G Etheridge	Cont. to Members Expenses + reimbursement	216.99
K Etheridge	“ “ “	208.00
A Farina-Childs	“ “ “	208.00
C Erasmus	“ “ “	208.00
C Clark	“ “ “	208.00
M Gwynne	“ “ “	208.00
D Davies	“ “ “	208.00
K G Williams	“ “ “	208.00
D Box	“ “ “	208.00
N Dix	“ “ “	208.00
A Short	“ “ “	208.00
L Phillips	“ “ “	96.00
J Griffiths	“ “ “	168.00
Positive Signs	External wall Sign	582.00
British Gas	Electricity Charges	58.77
John Hold	March Sals + reimbursements	1,696.76
HMRC	March Tax/ Employers Ins	1,181.13
Playworks	March Fee	20.00
<i>New Year</i>		
One Voice Wales	Membership Subscription 2025/26	1,588.00
Zurich Ins	Insurance Renewal Premium Payment 2025/26	1,635.37
Bebb Tasker & Sucksmith	Lease Payment	960.00
Timpson Ltd.	Office keys	36.00
Iceland	Miscellaneous	7.95
Amazon	Printing paper/ink	158.24
Spectre Fibre Ltd	Broadband Costs March '25	46.20
Spectre Fibre Ltd.	Broadband Costs April '25	46.20

8. *To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 3rd.March 2025*

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

9. *Matters Arising*

There were no matters arising

10. To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 31st. March 2025

It was ***resolved*** the minutes be received

11. Recommendations to Town Council from Policy & Finance Committee

The following recommendations, per the Minutes are made to Town Council -

That the Working Group become the Staffing Sub – Committee, and after some discussion this was ***Agreed***.

It was also ***agreed*** by Committee that Cllr. Janet Griffiths take the place of Cllr. D Davies on the Working Party Group until the AGM

Unanimously agreed in respect of the Clerks additional hours worked (at the Office and at home) to retrospectively recommend to Town Council to formalise a payment of £110.50 in respect of Parking Fees plus £1,022.32 (based on 4 additional hours per week since January)
Furthermore in recognition of his ongoing commitment to Town Council as identified above it was ***unanimously agreed*** to recommend to Town Council he be paid his current salary for the month of April

It was ***unanimously agreed*** to recommend to Town Council that a donation of £250 be made to the Mayor's Charity Appeal

The Deputy Mayor reported that despite having made contact with other firms no one as yet had attended the Office to measure up and quote for the works. At the last Town Council meeting some members who had had dealings with similar types of shutters for doors/windows had remarked that the quotation from BGS for electric Roller shutters to Main entrance door & side panels in the sum of £6,607.72 + VAT did not seem unreasonable.

After some further discussion the general consensus of opinion was that this Committee should ***recommend*** to Town Council that Standing Orders/ Financial Regulations be suspended and the quotation be accepted in order to ensure the security of the building and safety of staff & members as a matter of urgency

12. To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Working Group Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd. April 2025

It was ***resolved*** the minutes be received

It was noted that Members ***unanimously agreed*** that Hannah Davies be offered the position of Clerk /RFO, subject to satisfactory references.

The Clerk raised the issue of parking fees potentially being reimbursable to the Clerk and again members were ***unanimous in agreeing to recommend*** same to Town Council.

After some discussion it was agreed parking fees be reimbursable, and the Clerk to check if there were any concessions for potential season tickets or similar

13. Review of Internal Controls

The Clerk presented his report which highlighted that Members are required to Review the adequacy of Internal Controls

Current practice -

Schedule of Payments to each meeting highlighting the Payee/ Reason for Payment/ Amount.

Payments are currently made via Bank Transfer albeit cheques require the signature of the Clerk together with two other signatories (currently Councillors G Edwards Etheridge , A Short & R Mills)

To further strengthen controls, it was agreed last year that any payment in excess of £1,000 must receive written confirmation by two of the three signatories referred to earlier or agreement Policy & Finance Committee

Meetings of Policy & Finance Committee

Budget Monitoring Reports to Town Council three times a year – comparing spend to budget, bank reconciliation etc.

To further strengthen controls, it was agreed that budget monitoring reports should be accompanied by bank statements for members perusal.

Furthermore, it has also now been agreed that Policy & Finance Committee will meet regularly between Town Council meetings

Internal Auditor audits Accounts during May/Early June in readiness for Annual Return to be completed and forwarded to Audit Wales (current external auditors) by 30th. July

After some discussion it was ***agreed*** the Internal Controls in place are considered adequate and proportionate

14. Review of Risk Management

The Clerk presented his report which highlighted that Members are required to review the adequacy of Risk Management

The misappropriation of funds by the Clerk (as currently the only employee) is an obvious risk, but hopefully the Internal Controls highlighted above would greatly negate that risk.

Little of the rest of the work of the Town Council, other than the Organisation of Events is considered to carry much of a risk.

Meetings of the Events Committee highlight any risk areas.

We are required to submit a Risk Assessment in respect of the Parades and the Site Activities each year to Caerphilly County Borough, and attend the ESAG Events Organisers Forum to discuss same with members of C.C.B.C. and the Emergency Services prior to event as and when requested.

After some discussion it was ***agreed*** the Risk Management Controls in place are considered adequate and proportionate

15. Review of Insurance Provision

The Clerk presented his report which highlighted that Members are required to review the adequacy of our Insurance Provision

Currently Mandatory Cover in respect of Public Liability stands at £15 million & Employer's Liability stands at £10million, whilst Fidelity Guarantee, Official's Indemnity, & Libel & Slander are £250,000 each.

Christmas Lighting, Chains of Office, Civic Regalia, Defibrillators, Office furniture/ equipment, tablets etc. are also insured, at reported costs, whilst any equipment hired for a specific event is insured separately if required.

After some discussion it was **agreed** the Insurance Provisions in place are considered adequate and proportionate

16. Planning Applications

The Clerk presented his report on Planning Applications received since the last meeting -

Case Ref. 25/0144/HH

Location: 31 Cae Collen Blackwood NP12 1FF

Proposal: Convert existing garage to living space

Case Officer: Josie Millson (01443 864708 : milsoj@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 25/0159/COU

Location: Blackwood Business Centre 85 High Street Blackwood NP12 1ZA

Proposal: Change the use from Office and Storage on First Floor, Second Floor and Attic Floor to 6 no residential units. Including rear dormers, a roof extension and an extension to existing Fire Escape

Case Officer: Joshua Burrows (01443 864427 : burroj1@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 25/0170/CLPU

Location: 12 Parklands Blackwood NP12 1HU

Proposal: Obtain a Lawful Development Certificate for a proposed new single storey rear extension with a pitched roof, the existing flat roof over the kitchen to be replaced with a pitched roof to match the new extension roof

Case Officer: Luke Buffery (01443 864709 : buffel@caerphilly.gov.uk

Case Ref. 25/0197/RET

Location: Ventura 6 Lon Pennant Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1EL

Proposal: Retain and complete the erection of a replacement dwelling

Case Officer: Joshua Burrows (01443 864427 : burroj1@caerphilly.gov.uk

17. Reports

Cllr. D Davies informed the meeting that Blackwood Royal British Legion were organising a Service at the Cenotaph at 11.00am on May 8th.

18. Confirmation of Date Of Annual General Meeting

It was confirmed the AGM would be held at 6.30pm on Tuesday 6th. May