

DRAFT

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON 6TH. MAY 2025**

Present : Cllr. R Mills (Mayor)

Cllr. G Etheridge (Deputy Mayor)

Cllrs. J Griffiths, K Jones, C Clark, N Dix, A Farina-Childs, D Davies, K Williams, D Box,
C Erasmus, K Etheridge , A Short, L Phillips & M Gwynne

Prior to the start of the meeting a Minutes Silence was held in memory of former Councillor & Mayor of Town Council Margaret Veater MBE who had sadly passed away a couple of weeks ago.

The Mayor then made a presentation on behalf of Town Council to the Clerk in recognition of his retirement after some 17 years as Clerk and thanked him for his dedication to the role, and service to the community. The Clerk responded by saying he had enjoyed his time with Town Council and wished it and members continued success in the years to come.

He reiterated he would, as promised look to complete the Accounts, and get everything in order over the coming weeks in readiness for submission of all required information for the Audit and also continue to administer meetings/ finances on behalf of the Council until the new Clerk was firmly in post, if Town Council agreed.

Members thanked the Clerk and **unanimously agreed** he continue to act as Clerk/ Responsible Financial Officer in the interim.

1. To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr P Cook.

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

Nominations were invited.

Cllr. G Etheridge was proposed by Cllr. A Farina-Childs and seconded by Cllr. C Clark, and Cllr. R Mills nominated by Cllr. A Short and seconded by Cllr.C Erasmus.

Cllr. K Etheridge declared a personal interest and took no part in the election of Mayor.

After a secret ballot, the Clerk reported Cllr. G Etheridge had been elected.

Cllr. G. Etheridge, 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. Jan Griffiths was proposed by Cllr. C Clark & seconded by Cllr.K Etheridge and Cllr. A Short was nominated by Cllr.R Mills and seconded by Cllr K Jones.

After a secret ballot the Clerk reported Cllr Jan Griffiths had been elected and she 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 Bowls Club.

5. *Outgoing Mayoral Report*

Cllr. Mills admitted it had been a somewhat difficult and challenging period with family health matters but that he had made every effort to attend all Council Events, and invitations received. He had also as a matter of course tried to visit businesses on the High Street fairly regularly to discuss any issues of concern they may have had.

He also reported that he had raised in excess of £1,300 to date for his Charity, with the promise of a very generous donation from Blackwood Garden Centre in lieu of the cost of the Christmas tree, with written confirmation required by the Clerk before finalising the total.

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 & G Etheridge

(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) Staffing Sub-Committee

It was ***agreed*** this be deferred to Policy & Finance Committee for representation

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 as presented 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 Etheridge & K Etheridge

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

Councillor G Etheridge with K Etheridge as Deputy

As the Blackwood Town Centre Management Group/ Retail Partnership Group & After Hours, Night Time Economy & Bus Station Multi Agency Groups have not met for a number of years it was agreed no nominations be made.

It appears these responsibilities could now come under the remit of the Blackwood Town Centre Stakeholder Meetings, to which all members are invited

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

Councillor C Clark

(d) Plas Mawr Community Centre Committee

It was agreed Councillor Jan Griffiths represent Town Council, and the Secretary of the Committee be informed accordingly.

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**

2nd. June 2025

7th. July 2025

1st. September 2025

6th. October 2025

3rd. November 2025

1st. December 2025

5th. January 2026

2nd. February 2026

2nd. March 2026

13th. April 2026

11th. May 2026 (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 –

Cllr.K Etheridge declared a personal interest in this item, as did the Mayor and neither took any part in the decision making

It was proposed by Cllr.C.Clark, seconded by Cllr.J Griffiths and *agreed by a majority that an allowance of £1,000* be made.

Community and town councils can provide a payment to the deputy mayor or deputy chair of the council up to a maximum of £500 -

The Deputy Mayor declared a personal interest in this item and took no part in the decision making

It was proposed by Cllr.C Clark, seconded by Cllr. K Etheridge and *agreed by a majority that an allowance of £500* be made.

11. County Borough Report

County Members gave a brief update on the following issues –

No further progress on Pobl Development at Coronation Road, albeit a meeting had been held with Pobl but members had not been invited to attend.

Numerous complaints regarding fly tipping around the area and pot holes.

Problems still ongoing at Cwm Gelli.

With the flats adjacent to the Institute now occupied, there are issues regarding rubbish left on the pavement outside and not in the bin bays provided and this may require a meeting with Pobl to ensure the correct rubbish/recycling bins are used by tenants.

There have been reports of a tent being pitched on the Showfield and someone sleeping there. Apparently neither the police or parks section have powers to move the individual on,

Consultation has apparently been held with residents of Bridge Street, William Street and possibly others regarding Residents Parking, and members raised concern that the poor response might lead to decisions being made not in keeping with the majority wishes.

Further delays on the Skateboard park, apparently potential drainage issues need to be addressed within the final design now promised within the next 4/5 weeks.

The Scrutiny Committee Meeting on Libraries & Leisure Centres is next Monday evening, and their recommendations will be discussed by Cabinet on the following Wednesday at 10.00am. Cllr K Etheridge has asked the Chairs permission to peak at Cabinet, decision on this request still awaited.

12. *Correspondence*

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

Caerphilly C.B.C.

Town Centre News

Footfall figures

Confirmation of cancellation of Community Council Liaison Sub Committee on 28th April - next meeting July

Notification of 1st. Precept Payment £46,296.75

Notification of Payment in respect of Mayor's Charity Concert £905.15

Reminder Joint Scrutiny Committee 5.00pm Monday 12th. May –
Leisure Centres & Libraries

Wales Audit Office

Additional Information on Full Audit requirements – will report to
Policy & Finance Committee

One Voice Wales

Request for nominations to Independent Audit Committee Membership
– Cllr. Jan Griffiths has expressed an interest

Training Courses available April to June – details forwarded to members

Joint OVW/SLCC event on Ethical Frameworks – Wednesday 14th. May

Copy of Draft Minutes of Area Committee Meeting held 16th. April

In respect of the OVW nominations for Independent Audit Committee Membership it was **agreed** Cllr. Jan Griffiths be nominated by Town Council.

With regard the OVW Training Courses, both the Mayor & Clerk urged members to check the available courses and make every effort to ensure they undertake up to date training on the Code Of Conduct, as this was highlighted in the Governance Statement that Council will be considering within the next few weeks as part of the Audit process.

13. *Schedule of Payments*

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

		£. p
Amazon	Copy /Printer Paper	24.49
Amazon	Copy/Printer Ink	84.78
Amazon	Copy/Printer Paper	24.48
Amazon	Copy/Printer Paper	24.49
Green Magic	Pavement Sign/leaflet dispensers	198.48
British Gas	Gas Charges	158.05
C.C.B.C.	NNDR – Direct Debit	623.00*
G.W.R.	Travel costs	153.10
Gus Jones	Presentation	149.50
S.S.E.	Christmas Ltg. costs	354.13
John Hold	April Salary/ Reimbursement	870.28
HMRC	April Tax/N.I.	689.31
Kath. Watkins	April Fee	20.00
British Gas	Electricity Charges	54.93

The Clerk reported that arrangements had now been made for the Welsh Water account (£855.01) to be paid monthly via Direct Debit - £77.73 May 15th.

Members queried whether we were on a water meter as this might be beneficial. The Mayor responded by saying we weren't at present but this could be explored with the permission of the landlords, and would be looked into.

14. *To Receive the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held 7th. April 2025*

With the amendment under correspondence that Bank holiday should read 5th. May & not 5th. June, It was **resolved** the minutes be approved as a true record.

15. *Matters Arising*

There were no matters arising.

16. *Applications for Financial Assistance*

The Clerk reported on the following applications have been received -

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church Luncheon Club - Initial request for contribution towards hire of

coach (£750) to take pensioners on an outing to Weston-Super-Mare.

Blackwood Bowls Club – Request for continuation of sponsorship, not as last year with a specific sponsorship package, but as a contribution of whatever chosen value towards next season and its associated challenges.

After some discussion it was *agreed* the applications be deferred to the Policy & Finance C'ttee.

17. *Provisional Out-turn 2024/25 & Accounting Statement*

The Clerk presented his report which showed the requirement of £ 21,637.73 from Reserves (compared with an original estimate of £36,665) to balance the accounts.

Reserves/ balances as at 31st. March 2025 now stands at £143,910.31, albeit with £25,000 as agreed General Reserves/ Christmas Lights earmarked £ 22,547/ Community Infrastructure Levy £43,149 (with specific criteria attached to spending) & Other £53,304 (with £20,110 already earmarked to support the Precept for 2025/26).

He explained that the Accounting Statement as presented showed the same figures in a slightly different format for Audit purposes.

Cllr. K Williams remarked how pleasing it was that the spend on the Offices Lease/ Running Costs of £19,814.25 was so close to the original estimate of £20,000.

She also raised a few queries on the accounts which the Clerk answered and satisfied same.

18. *Planning Applications*

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

Case Reference 25/0262/HH

Location : 5 Lilian Road, Blackwood, NP12 1DN

Proposal : Demolish existing single storey rear extension & construct new single storey rear extension

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

He also reported verbally on an additional notification received earlier in the day namely

Case Reference 25/0265/HH

Location : 68 Sunnybank Road, Blackwood, NP121HZ

Proposal : Erect two storey side extension & single storey lean to at rear

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

After a short discussion it was agreed no objections be raised.

19. *Reports*

Some members queried the mixed messages regarding the Royal British Legion arrangements for VE Day, and were disappointed standards seemed to be slipping back without Town Council input.

Cllr. D Davies confirmed that the Service to commemorate the 80th. Anniversary of V.E. Day would be held at the Cenotaph Blackwood on Thursday 8th. May from 10.45 am.

Wreaths would be available on the day for organisations to lay.

Cllr. Davies also reported that in line with Margaret Veater's wishes there was no funeral, but the family were organising a Celebration of her life to be held at the Moose Hall, Blackwood on

Sunday 18th. May 2.00pm – 4.00pm.

The Mayor & Clerk reported that in line with the recommendation the Quotation from BGS for the electric roller shutters to the main entrance door and side panels had been accepted, and that the Company had requested payment in advance of works. After a short discussion it was unanimously agreed the Clerk arrange payment in the sum of £7,929.26 (includes £ 1,321.54 reclaimable VAT) to enable the works to commence ASAP.