

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD 2ND. JUNE 2025

Present : Cllr. G Etheridge (Mayor)

Cllr. J Griffiths (Deputy Mayor)

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllrs. R Mills, M Gwynne & A Short

2. Declarations of Interest

There were No Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Police Report

Apologies had been received from the new Inspector Shaun Banfield & Sgt. Liam Brown, and whilst not present had forwarded a brie report to the Mayor, which he duly shared with the meeting.

The Inspector wanted to reassure members of the effective response teams actions in dealing with the suspicious device reported in the Blackwood area. Persons within the vicinity were evacuated and kept safe until it had been proved that the device was not a live bomb. Investigations are ongoing and appropriate safeguarding measures have been taken.

Sgt. Liam Brown had reported that it was pleasing to see a consistent downward trend in ASB, and more pleasing to report that since the repeat offender had had their day in court there has been no reported incidents of them causing any issues.

An emerging trend now however, relates to a number of refuse fires within the town believed to be by a homeless male. Investigations are ongoing.

This month sees an increase in resources deployed into the town and surrounding areas, the community action team will be conducting high visibility patrols targeting ASB and acquisitive crimes. This is not in reaction to any ongoing issues but to deliver on the mission to improve trust and confidence within the community – as summer approaches additional resources being out in the community will ensure this.

Over the last year Operation Lumley (now Lockwood) has been in place covering the town centre and bus station, additional funding has been obtained and patrols will continue from these officers in addition to the neighbourhood team and the community action team.

Finally, to inform members that Anthony Edwards (previous Community Safety Warden with CCBC) has joined the Neighbourhood Team. With his outstanding knowledge of the area and previous issues he has been assigned to the town centre

4. County Borough Report

Borough members gave a brief update on current issues -

A meeting regarding the Pobl Development at Coronation Road and issues relating to access and lamp posts positioning had been arranged for Thursday 5th June.

Continuing issues regarding rubbish storage/ collection at the new Pobl Development adjacent to the Blackwood Miners Institute

Ongoing issues at the Showfield regarding rough sleepers. After several complaints, the police had made arrests under some obscure legislation relating to stays up to 42 days.

Mindless vandalism at Bedwellty Churchyard

The Blackwood Placemaking Plan and the meeting with the Consultants and Officers on Monday 9th June 5.00pm – 6.30pm at Ty Penallta.

Town councillors were urged to make every effort to attend to ensure our views are heard and understood on some of the what some would consider ludicrous proposals put forward.

The Mayor asked that if any member wished a hard copy of said Plan to contact him asap and he would arrange same.

Upcoming proposals for a Review of Business Rates by Mark Drakesford MS had been queried by Cllr. K Etheridge whilst also extending an invitation for him to visit businesses on the High Street.

From information received in respect of an FOI request, car park income from Blackwood amounts to £420k per annum whilst Caerphilly generates £193k and Bargoed £42k, thus perpetuating the argument Blackwood is the cash cow for the Borough but also the forgotten town in the Borough.

Members expressed their disgust that on the one hand CCBC had backtracked on the Closure of Bedwellty due to public backlash, but then immediately cut back the opening hours, thereby excluding the use of the Centre by schools and several long standing groups and making it almost impossible to become a more viable site – closure by stealth !!!

5. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor referred to his written report previously forwarded to all members and stated this would continue in future.

He proposed that the Borough Councillors be asked a week prior to Town Council meetings to submit a brief written report to the Clerk so it can be forwarded to all members with other reports. This was *agreed*.

The Mayor reported he had attended the Blackwood Baptist Church Men's Breakfast Club on 17th May, which was attended by approx 35 people.

He also reported that he had been requested to visit Mr.& Mrs. Williams who are celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 7th. June and would arrange lowers for the day. Furthermore he had arranged an initial site meeting to discuss the necessary works on Remembrance Garden (New Poppy & Flagpole) opposite the Library.

6. Correspondence

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

C.C.B.C. Footfall Figures

News Online

Blackwood Placemaking Plan - Awaiting details of meeting with CCBC/
County Borough Members & Town Council – either 28th. May/3rd.June/ 9th.
June & request Town Council feedback by 13th. June - ***Forwarded to members***
22nd. May

One Voice Wales Training Dates

Report of National Awards Conference held 30th. April 2025

GAVO Request for Sponsorship of Voluntary Awards Evening to be held October 7th

Blackwood Bowls Club Application for Financial Assistance towards towards purchase of
equipment

Various correspondence regarding Beach Party Entertainment & Borough Events Team requirements

7. ***Schedule of Payments***

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

		<i>£. p</i>
Bebb Tasker & Sucksmith	Monthly Lease payment (incl.VAT £160.00)	960.00
B.G.S	Security Shutters for Offices (incl.VAT £ 1321.54)	7,929.26
British Gas	Gas Charges (Incl. VAT £1.85)	38.93
Spectrum Fibres	Broadband Charges (Incl. VAT £ 7.70)	46.20
G. Etheridge	Mayors Allowance	1,000.00
J. Griffiths	Deputy Mayors Allowance	500.00
C.C.B.C.	NNDR (Standing Order)	625.00
Welsh Water	Water Bill (Standing Order)	77.71
John Hold	May Salary incl. £50 P/C reimbursement	870.28
HMRC	May Tax/ Emp. N.I.	689.31
K.Watkins	May Fee	20.00
Post Office	Postage – Recorded Mail	8.75
British Gas	Electricity Charges (Incl. VAT £2.36)	49.63
Bebb Tasker & Sucksmith	Monthly Lease Payment (incl.VAT £160.00)	960.00

8. ***To Confirm the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Town Council held on 6th May 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 13th May 2025*

It was **resolved** the minutes be received a true record.

11. *Recommendations to Town Council from Policy & Finance Committee*

The Clerk highlighted the Recommendations to Council, namely -

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church Luncheon Club – The request being a contribution towards hire of coach to take the members on a Summer outing to Weston Super Mare

After some discussion it was **unanimously agreed to recommend** to Town Council that a Grant of £400 be awarded (50% of cost of hire) in recognition this the first application the Clerk could remember from the Club and for the sterling work undertaken for members of the community.

After a short discussion, it was **unanimously agreed** a grant of £400 be awarded

With regard the new questions forming part of the Annual Statement that members will need to sign off prior to 30th June, namely -

In consultation with the community we have developed a vision and purpose for the Council and used this vision to inform the Council's plans, budget and activities.

Currently would consider recommend answering No

Whilst our Strategic Plan is identified within our Annual Reports, we did not during Covid actually consult the community on same.

The majority of the Plan is still relevant, and with a few minor amendments could be posted for consultation with the community on the website/ facebook page - and form a priority for 2025/26 in our Annual Plan.

During discussion on this issue, members raised the possibility of re-introducing a Town Council Newsletter perhaps three times a year to be delivered to each household. Whilst there was general consensus on producing same, delivery and potential costs needed to be carefully considered, and it was **agreed** this needed further consideration

We have adopted a Code of Practice for members and officers and implemented an appropriate training plan for members to ensure all councillors understand their role and responsibilities

Currently would consider recommend answering Yes

Whilst we have adopted a Code of Conduct for members, and indeed have a Training Plan (may need to revisit same prior to signing off Statement), members present **agreed** we should make training on the Code of Conduct mandatory and look to organise online training courses via One Voice Wales at the Council Offices to assist those members less confident in joining individually. Furthermore, this should be arranged as a matter of some urgency.

After a short discussion it was **unanimously agreed** that Code of Conduct Training as outlined above be mandatory for members who have not undertaken same within the last three months and arranged with One Voice Wales asap

12. *To Receive the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Town Council held on 16th May 2025*

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

The Mayor asked that the Minutes be returned at the end of the meeting as they were confidential.

After some discussion, it was **agreed** the advertisement be re-circulated to the usual contacts –
Caerphilly C.B.C., One Voice Wales & Society of Local Council Clerks

13. Annual Report 2024/25

The Clerk presented the updated version which was **approved** by members, and **agreed** should now be placed on our Web page

14. Planning Applications

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

Case Ref. 25/0284/CLPU

Location: 77 Bloomfield Road Coed Duon NP12 1LY

Proposal: Obtain a Lawful Development Certificate for single storey rear extension with flat roof

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

He also reported verbally on the following applications received since preparation of report, namely –

Case Ref. 25/0301/TPO

Location: 9 Sunnybank Road Blackwood NP12 1HY

Proposal: Carry out various tree works to T1 Beech Tree (Tree Preservation Order 2/82/IBC)

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

Case Ref. 25/0339/HH

Location : 64 Bloomfield Road, Blackwood NP12 1LX

Proposal : Create 2 No. parking spaces with the curtilage of the dwelling

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

15. Reports

Cllr D Box gave a brief update on the Task & Finish Group meeting chaired by Jackie Williams (Aneurin Bevan U.H.B.)

The Group had made approaches to Gwent Police to switch off comments on their site relating to Chartist Bridge incidents, and after some initial resistance by certain officers the approach was successful.

Funding had been secured for the Poem of Hope written by Patrick Jones in collaboration with the Jacob Abraham Foundation & Papyrus. Funding is now being sought for a bench to be situated near the Chartist Bridge.

The report is still awaited from ARUP regarding potential heightening of barriers.

Cllr. Farina-Childs queried the possible purchase of additional lamp post poppies for approach to and around the Cenotaph area and this was unanimously agreed.

Several members referred to the closure of Santander in the High Street and the fact there was to be a presence once a week at the Libanus Lifestyle Centre, albeit Town Council had yet again made contact and offered use of our premises like HSBC.

The Mayor and Clerk reported that a quotation in the sum of £1,972 had been received from Fusion to run cables/leads under the board room tables, thus negating any trailing leads for use with tablets/ computers for Meetings and as importantly for Training Sessions, as this had caused some problems earlier in the year. It was unanimously agreed that given hopefully fairly imminent potential training events, this be accepted and the works undertaken asap.

16. Events Committee -

New Blackwood in Bloom Competition

The Clerk reported that when this was last discussed by Town Council at its meeting on 5th. August 2024, the decision was that –

The Competition be suspended until next year (2025), and in the meantime the Events Committee consider how to better advertise the Competition, and possibly even ask individuals to nominate their own or somebody else's front garden for judging.

After some discussion it was ***agreed*** we place a Notice on our webpage & facebook page, together with posting same in local shops and other community venues requesting people to nominate front gardens by sending in photographs for members to then consider the winners. It was also ***agreed*** that if possible we present vouchers instead of cash prizes (ideally via Blackwood Garden Centre), and also consider purchase of plaques instead of certificates. Ideally this should be done as soon as possible, given that gardens will soon be at their best.

Beach Party to be held on Saturday 28th. June 2025

The Clerk reported that when this was last discussed by Town Council at its meeting on 7th. April 2025, the decision was that –

We proceed without a formal 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.

Following a request by the Mayor, as the event is only 4 weeks away, the Clerk reported that over the past week or so, he had made contact with the local community groups that always support our Summer/ Winter Events, and had arranged a provisional Entertainment Programme which he shared with members at the meeting, whilst stating he would continue working closely with the events team to ensure all relevant paperwork etc. is in place prior to the Event