

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15TH. SEPTEMBER 2025

Present : Cllr G Etheridge (Mayor)

Cllrs. C Erasmus, K Etheridge, C Clark, K Williams, R Mills, A Short, A Farina- Childs,
D Davies, P Cook, & K Jones

1. To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllrs. J Griffiths (Deputy Mayor), N Dix, M Gwynne & D Box

2. Declarations Of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. Police Report

PCSO Anthony Edwards was welcomed to the meeting, and he gave a brief report on issues affecting the town.

He reported that whilst there had been a reduction in the total crimes reported, across all categories, over the past couple of months there had been a slight increase in ASB, coinciding with the school holidays. The hotspots being the Bus Station, Mc Donalds and ASDA, with the issues relating to boy racers at ASDA mainly being reported after 10.00pm. However, targeted operations at the time had led to several arrests and cars being impounded.

He informed members that Operations regarding shoplifting were upcoming with ASDA & B&M being the mostly likely targets.

He also reported that there was now a compliment of some 10 PCSO's for our area, albeit with shifts / holidays/sickness it was likely only 4 or 5 would be available on a daily basis. Furthermore, there was now a compliment of 5 Ward Officers, albeit only 2 were currently in post.

The Mayor in thanking the Officer for his attendance stated he thought things had been relatively quiet at the Bus Station over the past 2/3 weeks, but that e scooters were becoming a nuisance.

4. County Borough Report

The following Report had been received (and forwarded to members) from the Blackwood Borough Members -

1. The continuing saga of Missed Bin Collections continues to effect residents.
2. Fly tipping remains an issue in and around Blackwood.
3. Graffiti and Vandalism in the Bus Station.
4. On-going issues with the Pobl Development at the rear of Coronation Rd.
5. Issues now with the New Development by Snap Fitness. Trees being cut down, vehicles being parked illegally etc.
6. Issues again with the Bin Storage Facility by the New Flats adjacent to the BMI.
7. Issues with vehicles in Asda late at night which we have all contacted the Police about and sent video evidence.
8. The regeneration of the BMX Track which is an on-going project which will be great for local youths when up and running.

9. The HMO on Albany Rd where a meeting is taking place at The TC Office on 12th September.
10. Skatepark. This now looks increasingly likely that this will be rescheduled to 2026.
11. Issues with pollution in the Sirhowy River close to Blackwood.
12. The numerous issues relating to the Temporary Traffic Lights at Libanus due to a New Gas Pipe being installed.
13. More Trollies in the river

The Report was received and accepted

5. *Mayoral Announcements*

The following Report on had been received (and forwarded to members) from the Mayor -

1. The preparations for the Remembrance Service are under way, and the Order of Service is near completion, just some last-minute entries before sending to the printers.
2. The dates for the Poppy appeal Launch have been confirmed at the miner's institute and St Margarets Church as October 23rd, 2025, Service has been arranged to start at 10am.
3. Mayors Charity Concert in Aid of Wales Air Ambulance has been arranged and finalised for Tuesday November 25th starting at 7pm in the BMI
4. Rhian Davies has now taken up post of Deputy Clerk to the Council and she will be joined later by Mandy Betts who will be the new Clerk to BTC.
5. Met with the Town Centre manager to discuss locations in the high street for additional seating, also discussed the possibility of flower beds outside the old Wilkinson and Cinema.
6. The ITU department undertook a deep clean as per my request of the bus station and the weeds as they were out of control also removal of graffiti.
7. The subject of shutters has been highlighted again at the bus station and is now under review with more ideas of how it can be done, and an update will follow.
8. Concerns have been raised about a possible HMO on Albany Road in Blackwood and the company who made the application have received my letter asking for a meeting and we are now awaiting a date.
9. There has been strong feeling of objection to the proposed HMO, and a petition is being signed by residents at the TCO.
10. Meeting with the police regarding an update on operation Lockwood was carried out last week and I'm pleased to say ASB is on the downward slope.
11. Discussions with CAB have also taken place as to the cost of an additional day at the offices and cost have been passed to John
12. We are currently in deep conversation with regards the festive lighting in Blackwood as CCBC want us to take them down, currently John, Rhys, Kevin, Andrew, Nigel and I are awaiting a meeting to discuss further with CCBC
13. Site visit has also taken place in regards restoration of the old BMX track and I am awaiting a return of Nicola off annual leave to discuss the next steps.

The Report was received and accepted

6. *Correspondence*

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

Caerphilly C.B.C.	Footfall figures News Online Permanent Traffic Order – Prohibition & Restriction of Waiting & Loading and on Street Parking Places – proposed changes to existing Residents Parking in Blackwood Concerns raised regarding recent Licence Approval for Flour Mill Receipt of 2 nd . instalment of Precept Payment £46,296.75 Various correspondence regarding potential use of former Bus Station Café as venue for Talking Shop/ Community Hub without any prior consultation with Town Council Notification of next Stakeholders meeting scheduled for 6.00pm Thursday 23 rd . October – venue to be arranged Notification of Informal drop in sessions for members of the public re. Blackwood Placemaking Plans at Blackwood Library on Tuesday 23 rd . Sept. 15.00 – 18.00; Wed. 24 th .Sept. 11.30 – 13.00 & 14.00-15.00 & Thursday 25 th . Sept. 09.30 – 12.00 Notification of proposed dates for Town & Comm Councils Liaison Sub – C'ttee Meetings – 23 rd March/20 th . July/ 23 rd . November 2026 – start time 6.00 Notification of 2 new Information Boards and upgrade of four existing ones throughout town
Liberty Care	Invitation to members to attend Community & Live Care Music Festival being held on Wednesday 24 th . September 2.00pm – 5.00pm at Blackwood RFC
Gwent Suicide Prevention	Request to attend November Town Council meeting to update members
HM Revenue & Customs	Request for payment of supposed underpayment of Tax/ N.I. contributions in the sum of £4,544.14 plus interest accrued totalling £5,621.03 relating back to 2020/21, 2021/22, 2023/2024 <i>I have made contact to dispute same and have since identified the Majority of payments on old bank statements – the problem would appear to be potentially the wrong Reference being attached to payments via Bank and am confident the issue can be resolved over coming weeks</i>
Citizens Advice Bureau	Following a general enquiry regarding potential cost of additional Advice Sessions, we have been advised an additional session would cost approx £10,000 per annum <i>Given the budgetary commitment (Equivalent to approx £3.50 increase on Precept) I would recommend no discussion at this point</i>

but to postpone until 2026/ 27 Budgetary requirements are discussed in detail later in the year

7. Schedule of Payments

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

		£. p
HMRC PAYE	Tax/ N.I. June	689.31
Bebb tasker & Sucksmith	July Lease Payment	960.00
Pullman (Card)	Travel Expenses	244.80
Pullman (Card)	“ “	27.00
K Etheridge	Flowers	21.94
Fusion Electrics	Electrical work	180.00
Spectrum Fibres	Broadband	46.20
British Gas	Gas charges	29.10
Caerphilly C.B.C. (D.D.)	N.N.D.R.	625.00
Welsh Water (D.D.)	Water Rates	77.73
Post Office (Card)	Postages	13.60
Petty Cash (Card)	Petty Cash	44.95
K Watkins	July Fee	20.00
HMRC PAYE	Tax/ N.I.	689.31
John Hold	July Salary	820.28
Bebb Tasker & Sucksmith	August Lease Payment	960.00
British Gas	Electricity Charges	51.79
Caerphilly C.B.C. (D.D.)	N.N.D.R.	625.00
Welsh Water (D.D.)	Water Rates	77.73
Spectrum Fibres	Broadband	46.20
Blackwood Garden Centre	Blackwood in Bloom Vouchers	150.00
One Voice Wales	Training Fees	752.00
Don Elsbury	Repairs to lighting	384.00
B.G.S.	Key Fob	300.00
British Gas	Gas Charges	30.11
John Hold	August Salary	820.28
HMRC PAYE	Tax/ N.I. August	689.31
K Watkins	Fee August	20.00
British Gas	Electricity Charges	51.96
Bebb Tasker & Sucksmith	Lease Payment September	960.00
Spectrum Fibres	Broadband / equipment	303.96
British Gas	Gas charges	31.11

8. To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held 7th. July 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 Extraordinary Meeting of Town Council held 7th. August 2025

The Clerk pointed out that the minutes should reflect the working week as 37 hours not 37.5 hours

With that amendment, It was **resolved** the minutes be approved as a true record

11. Budget Monitoring Report to Period 5 - 31st. August 2025

The Clerk presented his Report which was **unanimously agreed** by members

12. Applications for Financial Assistance

The Clerk reported he had received Applications from the following -

Blackwood Town Cricket Club	Seeking funding for purchase of 70 water bottles with club logo for all members of junior teams
Blackwood Town Cricket Club	Seeking additional funding of £500 towards cost of new wicket cutter (£8,130 total cost - £6,500 grant leaving £1,630)
Blackwood Comm.History Group	Seeking funding for portable screen, digital projector & stand (£171.55)
Blackwood RFC Juniors (Under 7's)	Seeking funding for kit (£840 total cost)

He also reported he had received a further application from Pontllanfraith Inner Wheel requested funding towards their fund raising in respect of the Breast Cancer Unit at YYF, stating that Town Council have a budgetary provision of £250 in the accounts.

After a short discussion it was agreed these be deferred to Policy & Finance Committee for detailed discussion, and the date of Monday 22nd. September was proposed. This was **unanimously agreed**

14. Christmas Lighting Update

The Clerk reported that following further correspondence from Street Lighting Section requesting cross street lighting be removed, he had sent the following letter to the Chief Executive & copied to Marcus Lloyd & Mark S Williams (both Directors)

Good morning Ed, I trust all is well with you.

My apologies for contacting you with what may seem like a rather trivial matter, but one that is causing significant distress amongst Town Council.

I have, for personal reasons, been out of the loop for a number of weeks, and of course am now only acting as Interim Clerk to the Town Council, but feel I must try and give some context to the ongoing Festive Lighting saga.

I attach, under separate cover a trail of emails that I would urge you to read to give a balanced view of how we are where we are.

I have as you will see raised several, what I consider to be reasonable queries, with Gareth to which I had received no adequate response (until perhaps his email of 28th August - albeit promising to get back to me on 5th. March) just the ongoing mantra of a Council decision, taken apparently some 20 plus years ago that catenary cables are not permitted on lamp-posts within the Borough. At that time Officers were to undertake a survey of all street lighting columns in effect to see if they could stand the additional weight and wind loading of the decorations, and individual town/ community councils would be consulted on the results. Presumably this survey had not thrown up any issues, or why else have we been allowed to install same over the intervening years without any issues.

I would add that I have been with the Town Council for some 17+ years and I was not aware of this position, and why should I, since no one as far as I can recollect has ever raised it as an issue, that is until Gareth Fleming took up the post.

Neither has anyone ever suggested that as intimated by Gareth that the County Borough in effect has abrogated responsibility in regard undertaking any further surveys regarding the suitability / safety of lighting columns albeit hanging baskets and banners are regularly permitted without query and all responsibility for such matters rests with Town Council.

I queried why this had suddenly become a major concern, especially when back in 2022 Mark S Williams & Marcus Lloyd were both well aware there were festoon lights across the High Street, given that they had sanctioned the payment for replacement lights for those removed without consultation, when improvements had been undertaken on the High Street, and no mention of this apparent ban on installation of same !! When raised the response as you will note was that he (Gareth) could not comment on decisions made by my predecessors or other individuals regarding these installations (fairly dismissive of two current Directors views)

I and members fear this knee jerk reaction to one isolated incident in Caerphilly has brought about what can only be described as proposed draconian measures.

Gareth, cited in an early email that he had observed several safety concerns relating to festive lighting installations and unknown or unauthorised catenary installations across the borough - but didn't identify any issues in Blackwood when given the opportunity.

I would also add that Town Councils recollection of the meeting held with Gareth varies slightly to his, and I have attached copy of report of said meeting presented to Council in March this year.

In summary, we waited some 7 months for a response to our queries, and perhaps naively thought no news is good news, and that having had chance to reconsider and double check with colleagues, that common sense had prevailed, and we would in fact be allowed to install the lighting as we have done, with C.C.B.C.'s knowledge for the past decade or so.

But no, just another rather curt email saying exactly as previously. What happened to wanting to work with us, and suggest possible solutions to the problem ?

With all the bad press the Borough have been having over the past 12 months or so, I wonder what the residents of Blackwood and neighbouring communities will make of what will, rightly or wrongly, appear to them to be another misguided decision, and this time not for Financial savings but to pander to the views of a relatively new officer in post, realistically going against what 2 Directors had knowingly agreed to just a couple of years earlier, and when nothing appears to have changed ??

Health & Safety has been a regular theme quoted, presumably on the back of one isolated incident over the past decades but have any risk assessments been undertaken, apparently not , as its not the Boroughs responsibility.

Also quoted are the load bearing issues, but yet again no calculations provided as to the weight of same festoon lighting or catenary wires, that I believe are insitu throughout the year, whilst also allowing hanging baskets (originally provided by the Borough until taken on by Town Council) and Council banners to be erected alongside them, and as far as we are aware never received any complaint of lighting causing a problem.

Will the banners and hanging baskets be the next to go in case they damage the precious lighting columns ?? I would on behalf of Town Council and the residents and visitors to our town over the festive period urge the Borough to reconsider this diktat and not be seen as the Grinch who spoiled/ stole Christmas. Things are difficult enough for traders and shoppers as it is, without pouring more misery onto the festive season.

I will of course complete the necessary paperwork to the best of my ability over the next week or so, and apologise for missing the end of August deadline, trusting Town Council will not be penalised, with some leeway being given due to my current circumstances.

Regards

John

Interim Clerk to Blackwood Town Council

He reported that a meeting had been requested with relevant officers and that we were awaiting

potential dates. He further reported the Chief Executive had requested a face to face meeting with him to discuss his letter.

15. Planning Applications

The following planning applications have been received since the last meeting -

Case Ref. 25/0435/TPO

Location: Farnham 11 Lon Pennant Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1EL

Proposal: Complete works to T1, beech, crown clean and shrink crown by up to 15%, to include dead wood and branch tips on TPO 2/82/LBC

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 of the building from a mixed use to 10no. residential units, to include the construction of rear roof dormers, rear extension and external staircase

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

Case Ref. 25/0483/HH

Location: 17 Pembroke Close Cefn Fforest Blackwood NP12 1JL

Proposal: Erect two storey extension to side and rear

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

Case Ref. 25/0490/FULL

Location: Land Adjacent To Woodview Isycoed Cottages Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1BG

Proposal: Erect 2 No. detached dwellings with associated works including access and parking

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

Case Ref. 25/0572/CLPU

Location: 2 Sunnybank Road Blackwood NP12 1HY

Proposal: Obtain a Lawful Development Certificate for proposed rear extension

Case Officer: Eric Wichert (01443 864709 : wichee@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 25/0557/HH

Location: Gernant Cottage Brookside Bungalows Cwmgelli Blackwood NP12 1BQ

Proposal: Demolish existing single storey extension and erect two storey extension

Case Officer: Emile Braithwaite (01443 864433 : braite@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Case Ref. 25/0595/COU

Location : 214 High Street Blackwood NP12 1AJ

Proposal : Chang the use from Class A1 to pet supply storeat the front and dog grooming at the rear

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

Case Ref.25/0609/COU

Location : 26 Albany Road, Blackwood NP12 1DZ

Proposal : Change of Use from residential welling to HMO C4 (Max 4 persons)

Case Officer : Joshua Burrows (01443 864427 : planning@caerphillygov.uk)

After some discussion, it was ***unanimously agreed*** that a letter of objection be sent by Town Council in respect of the proposal in respect of 26 Albany Road, quoting the following reasons -

1. Highway Safety Grounds
2. Parking Grounds as there are yellow lines one side of the road

3. The route is also a bus route, and there are traffic problems with persons refusing to give way
4. Fines are issued on a regular basis
5. Pedestrian Safety with vehicles parked on pavements with children's safety put at risk walking to and from Blackwood Primary School
6. A recent traffic survey has been undertaken outside the school and a crossing patrol installed because of the volume of traffic

15. Reports

The Clerk reported that he had only recently picked up the Borough Councils intention to amend car parking charges, and abolish the Up to 1 Hour charge of 40p and replace with an Up to 2 Hours charge of £1.05. He queried whether proper consultation had taken place, as it seems the proposals were apparently included in the Budget consultation papers way back in February.

He was not aware of any further direct consultation, and County Borough ward members present were of the same opinion.

The Clerk suggested he contact the Borough querying this and this was *agreed*

16. Upcoming Events - Remembrance Services / Civic Awards Evening/ Mayors Charity/ Xmas Market/ Carol Concert

The Clerk and Mayor gave a brief report on the following upcoming events

For members information the following dates have been agreed/ awaiting confirmation

Friday 7 th . November	Remembrance Service with Schools at Market Square 10.45am
Sunday 9 th . November	Remembrance Service at Cenotaph 10.45am
Saturday 22 nd . November	Winter Fair on the High Street 9.00am – 5.00pm including Light Switch On
Monday 24 th . November	Civic Awards Evening at Blackwood Miners Institute 7.00pm TBC
Tuesday 25 th . November	Mayors Concert at Blackwood Miners Institute 7.00pm

Thursday 4th. December

Town Council Offices Xmas Tree lights 6.45pm followed by
Carol Concert at Blackwood Methodist Church 7.00pm

In respect of the Civic Awards Evening, it was proposed by Cllr G Etheridge, seconded by Cllr RMills and unanimously agreed the Event go ahead and that arrangements be confirmed. The Mayor reported he had drafted Notices and Nomination Forms for 4 proposed categories, namely -

Volunteer of the Year

Business of the Year

Sport Excellence Award

Youth Award

and would post same on our Web page over the coming day or so

The Clerk confirmed funding was included in the budget

Cllr R Mills queried if there had been any progress on the Remembrance Garden

At this point Cllrs G Etheridge, K Etheridge & D Davies declared an interest, all being members of the Royal British Legion and took no part in any discussion or decision making.

The Clerk reported that he was aware other quotations had been sought for the proposed Improvements at the Remembrance Garden, but none had to his knowledge been received.

During a short discussion, given the relative urgency in hoping works might be completed by Remembrance Day, it was proposed by Cllr R Mills, seconded by Cllr A Farina-Childs and agreed by members that Standing Orders be suspended and the Quotation from J.S. Lee in the sum of £7,536.40 + VAT be accepted and works commence as soon as possible.