

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 20TH. OCTOBER 2025

Present: Cllr. K Williams(Chair)

Cllrs. J Griffiths (Deputy Mayor), C Clark, N Dix, R Mills & C Erasmus

Cllr. G Etheridge (Mayor) attended remotely via Teams

Also in attendance were Cllr. K Etheridge & Cllr A Farina-Childs (attended remotely via Teams)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllrs. D Box & D Davies

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held 22nd. September 2025

It was ***unanimously agreed*** the Minutes be received

4. Consideration of Nominations for Civic Awards

The Chair thanked the Mayor for photocopying and circulating copies of the nominations received.

After some discussion it was agreed to go through nominations in each of the categories identified on the posters & nomination forms, namely Volunteers, Businesses & Sporting Achievements. Furthermore, given the number of nominations in each category it was agreed to choose a winner & runner up in each.

In respect of Volunteers, nominations had been received in respect of

Esme Jones - work with Girl Guides

Pauline Roden - work with Mynyddislwyn & Other Choirs

HCT - work within the Community

British Legion - work within the Community

After much discussion regarding the merits of each it was agreed Esme Jones be ***recommended*** as the winner & Pauline Roden as runner up

In respect of Businesses, nominations had been received in respect of

Maxime Cinema

Big Dog Café

Unique Fitness (Richard James)

Blackwood Miners Institute

Again after much discussion on the merits of each of the nominees, it was ***unanimously agreed*** to initially recommend that given Town Council's close affinity with the Miners Institute, especially when threatened with closure, and the way the Institute has fought back and recently gaining a coveted Trip Advisor of the Year Award, they be awarded a Special Recognition Award. It was also ***agreed*** that the Maxime Cinema be ***recommended*** as the winner, (recognising its pivotal role over many years in increasing the footfall within town) & Unique Fitness (Richard James) as runner up (recognising its longevity in providing fitness opportunities to the local community)

In respect of Sporting Achievements, nominations had been received in respect of
Islwyn Running Club
Tracey Davies (Blackwood Comprehensive School)
Corey Grandin (Blackwood Primary School)
Blackwood Bowls Club
Richard Jones (Unique Fitness)

Cllr. C Clark declared an Interest as a member of Blackwood Bowls Club, and took no part in the discussion or decision making.

After much discussion it was ***unanimously agreed*** that Tracey Davies & Corey Grandin be ***recommended*** as Joint winners for their outstanding work within their respective schools in encouraging the children to not only partake in various sports but also to excel in them as proved by the number of successes gained over the past years

The Chair reported that the Blackwood in Bloom winner was 62 Cefn Road, Blackwood with 1 Dolwyddelan Close as the runner up and that these residents would be invited along to the Awards Evening to receive their prizes

5. Revised potential Budget for 2026/27 plus Medium Term Budget Strategy

The Clerk reported that he had updated the figures as presented to the last Committee meeting to reflect recent decisions regarding Defibrillators, computers, internal office security arrangements and likely employer's pension contributions.

He apologised that hard copies of his updated report were not available for members, many of whom remarked they had had some difficulty in opening/ printing same.

Under the circumstances he proposed he give a brief resume of the situation and that the report be considered by members at the next Policy & Finance Committee, as time was on our side with a firm decision not realistically required until January/ Early February and this was ***unanimously agreed***.

He reported that whereas he was asked to provide options ranging from a £5 to £10 per annum increase (at Band D) per annum in the Precept, he would now be recommending members to consider a minimum of £10 per annum.

Furthermore, an email from the Borough Events team indicated that Caerphilly CBC might be forced into removing funding for all events in town from next year onwards, meaning the possibility of losing the Spring Fair and the Christmas Market/ Fair and enquiring whether Town Council might guarantee funding of same. He indicated any commitment of say £20k per annum would automatically mean a further increase of approx £7 per annum on the Precept.

He further outlined that from information received from the Borough, some 635 households out of 3,772 in our area were in receipt of Council Tax Rebate, with some 483 receiving 100% relief. Furthermore, based on a projected £10 per annum increase at Band D, equivalent to 19p per week, only an estimated 29% of total households would actually pay the full proposed increase of £10 or more.

The Clerk was thanked for his informative report