

Blackwood Town Council



Minutes of the Full Council Meeting 3rd November 2025

Present in person: Councillors G Etheridge, A Short, R Mills, C Erasmus, D Davies, K Jones, A Farina Childs, D Box, J Griffiths, K Etheridge, P Cook, N Dix, P Cook, K WilliamA.

Also in attendance: J Hold (Interim Clerk), M Betts (Town Clerk /RFO), R Davies (Deputy Town Clerk)

Meeting Chairperson: Councillor/ Mayor G Etheridge.

To receive apologies for absence.

Councillor M Gwyn.

To receive Declaration of Interests or dispensations on any item(s) on this Agenda, if appropriate.

Councillors are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on the agenda in accordance with the Local Govt. Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

Cllr. Erasmus and Cllr. Farina Childs declared an interest in item 10 as Governors of Libanus Primary School.

Press and Public Participation Session.

Apologies from D Jones

1. Update on Mental Health Projects within our Community – Jackie Williams, Aneurin Bevan UHB Public Health Department

Jackie Williams attended she works for Aneurin Bevan Health board promoting mental health and wellbeing, she liaises with Cllr D Box.

The Chartist bridge is known to be an issue however it is not under the control of Health board it is under CCBC. The team were tasked to find out why people feel the need to go to the bridge as a last resort with suicide in mind. The team have found mental health levels at the worst for a long time so they have asked what could have helped. One survivor stated it would have helped if they had known what services were available to them.

Task and finish group set up. CHAMPS worked with police and health board with funding from Welsh Government for two projects. Papyrus – developed a poem of hope. This will be displayed across the town. The melo website wording has been updated as a result of this project. Resources developed and resources signposted. A pocket size pamphlet has been developed. Police and Probation service carries them and are able to give them out when required– a real success across Gwent with a potential to go national.

A bench is to be placed in town with part of the poem and a QR code with details of help. This will be located on Foundry hill just before roundabout. A training budget has been ring fenced for Blackwood. The initiative overall has been very positive and very successful. It was suggested that every councillor should carry the leaflets, and also attend the eLearning

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suicide awareness course, and that the poster should be displayed in the office. It was agreed these requests would be actioned. Jackie Williams will continue to liaise with Cllr Box.

There was some discussion around turning off negative comments on the Police Facebook site. It was suggested a letter be sent from all partners to the projects to the Police and Crime Commissioner on this issue.

A Charter is being developed with CCBC, and the Town Council is encouraged to sign up once completed. Members suggested lobbying Welsh government to raise the profile of these issues

Jackie Williams was thanked for her time.

2. Police Report (unable to attend report supplied)

CRIME

Crime levels have decreased in Blackwood month on month Since July 2025; decreasing from a spike in July 2025. October 2025 has 58 crimes recorded, a decrease from 74 in September 25, 85 in August and 94 in July.

ASB

ASB levels have decreased in Blackwood month on month since August 2025; with 11 recorded incidents in October 2025, a decrease from 23 in September 2025, and 28 in August.

SHOPLIFTING

Shoplifting specific offences have seen a reduction over the past few months, with x2 shoplifting offences taking place in October 25; a reduction from 11 in August 2025, and 7 in September.

The team have been running Operation Ferret - a dedicated shoplifting operation in Blackwood.

Since being implemented in September, multiple prolific shoplifters have been arrested and dealt with, with custodial sentences given.

BLACKWOOD POLICING

Blackwood now has a new ward manager, PC 1844 Emma Griffiths, who is working closely with PCSO Anthony Edwards to tackle issues in Blackwood. This will involve:

- Working in conjunction with Op Lockwood Hospot patrols which deploys 2 officers every other day to ASB Hotspots within Blackwood. Additional patrol days will also be added to cover specific events or where demand requires it. The primary purpose of the patrols is to provide the police presence and community engagement, but we have also had some arrests and stop searches where necessary and appropriate.
- Continued high visibility patrols by the NPT team.
- Continued efforts to engage with local businesses.
- Utilising CPWs, CPNs and CBOs to deter offending and ASB. These have been used to great success over the past few months to implement prompt interventions against emerging issue nominals.
- Bespoke vehicle-orientated ASB operations, and drug specific operations.

OPERATION FIREFLY

Op Firefly is an operation dedicated to tackling increases in vehicle related crime in the local area.

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COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM

The Community Action Team, having completed their 4 month tenure in Blackwood, have now moved on to another area of Caerphilly. The CAT conducted some excellent work in the area throughout this period of time, including:

- 30 arrests
- 41 seized vehicles
- 64 stop and searches
- Plain clothes operation

- i) Multiple stop and search procedures
- ii) One arrest for drug drive and possession with intent to supply
- Ran operations in Asda car park where:
 - i) Multiple people were dealt with for possession
 - ii) Multiple vehicles seized
 - iii) Multiple drivers reported for various driving offences
 - iv) One person for bladed article.

3. County Borough Report –

A. 300 name petition has been collected against HMO on Albany Road Blackwood on Highway safety grounds. Planning Committee is to consider the matter on 12th November.

Cllr Dix – will be speaking about the HMO on the planning committee. Most HMOs are not registered and don't need to be if under three storeys. This HMO only came to light as they wanted to physically change the building. The house has not yet been purchased as they are awaiting a planning decision. Hope to have decision by the next town council meeting in December.

B. There are still problems with the development of houses at the rear of Coronation Road and complaints have been sent to the Ombudsman.

C. The development of flats has commenced opposite the Gym Car Park above Iceland.

D. Town Centre Meeting with traders and police to discuss issues of concern

E. Site Meeting with Cllr Dix to discuss problems with Storage Bins outside the Flats on the Red Lion Site.

Additional Report

Cllr Griffiths (Deputy Mayor) – Pontllanfraith Inner Wheel coordinated the Turn the Town Pink event this year by having a special open evening from 5pm - 7pm at Bon Marche.

The Inner Wheel ladies provide refreshments for everyone, and the staff work overtime for free.

The Deputy Mayor kindly attended to give BTC's donation of £250 personally. With this donation and money raised from entrance fee and raffle just over £900 as raised which was divided between Velindre and Ystrad Fawr Breast cancer unit. Many local businesses donated raffle prizes.



4. Mayoral Announcements/ Report

Mayoral Report

- Ongoing problems with Red Lion Flats and Bin storage area
- Work has commenced on the Poppy opposite the Library
- Poppy appeal Launch was a great success
- Had meetings regarding the BMX track
- Attended the BMI to see the Black Rat Productions of Dai Cula
- Prepared order of service for Remembrance now with printers
- Site meeting with Highways and Enforcement in regards Chepstow Close
- Mayors Charity Concert preparations well underway 130 tickets sold so far.
- Meeting with BMI regarding the Civic Awards event and arrangements
- Attended the Blackwood Stake holders meeting
- Attended a meeting with police at the Town Council Offices
- Had meeting with regards Xmas tree on the Market Square this year
- Attended a meeting of the TCCLC in Risca
- New flag pole ordered for the poppy opposite library

5. Correspondence

Caerphilly CBC

Footfall Figures

Temporary Road & Car Park Closure to facilitate Winter Fair

Information as requested re. numbers of properties in Town Council area

per Council Tax Band & those in receipt of Council Tax Rebate Scheme

Confirmation of relaxation around structural testing arrangements for

Lighting on proviso we work with CCBC/Elsburys to ensure catenary and supporting infrastructure to be placed on building facades from Christmas 2026. After supplying all other info. application approved for Christmas

Lights as previous years.

Invitation to attend Blackwood Town Centre Stakeholders Meeting on

Thursday 23rd. October 6.00pm at ASDA - Community Champions Room

Invitation to attend online Community Council Liaison Sub Committee

Meeting on Monday 17th. November at 6.00pm

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One Voice Wales

Notification/ Reminder of online Area Committee Meeting to be held

15th. October

Notification of online Larger Councils Committee Meeting 23rd. October

TCCLC

Agenda/Reports for meeting to be held 21st. October

Elsbury's

Notification that some of our lamp post figurines will likely need replacing for next year

Wales Air Ambulance

Community Council Appeal 2025

Audit Wales

Enquiries relating to Full Audit

Messages of Thanks from Blackwood Cricket Club, Blackwood RFC Juniors, Pontllanfraith Inner Wheel & Blackwood Community History Group for Financial Assistance.

6. Schedule of Payments

The following payments have been made /are due for payment: -

SLCC	Membership Fee (Deputy Clerk)	202.00
Iceland	Office refreshments	22.80
British Gas	Gas Charges	96.05
Spectrum fibres	Broadband / phones	303.96
Blackwood Cricket club	Financial assistance	750.00
Inner Wheel Pontllanfraith (Breast Cancer Unit YYF)	Financial assistance	250.00
Blackwood Community history group	Financial assistance	171.55
Blackwood RFC juniors	Financial assistance	250.00
CCBC	NNDR	625.00
Welsh water	Water charges	77.73
Microsoft	Licences for new computer	239.98
Spectrum fibres	Broadband / phone	132.60
K & n R Print	Posters Remembrance `	15.00

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Note top Office supplies	Equipment	182.40
Bebb, Tasker & Suckersmith	Buildings Insurance	631.48
E infinity	Annual Licenses	2,283.12
Direct 365	Legionella Testing	418.80
SLCC	Clerks Manuals	104.46
Playworks	October fee	20.00
Interim Clerk	October salary	846.43
Deputy Clerk	October salary	897.44
HMRC PAYE	October Tax/ N.I	1,050.98
British Gas	Electricity charges	68.54
Bebb, Tasker & Suckersmith	Lease payment	960.00

No questions were raised regarding the payments.

7. To Confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 6th. October 2025

The minutes were approved and signed by the chair in the presence of the meeting.

8. Matters Arising

None

9. To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 20th.October 2025

The minutes were approved and signed by the chair in the presence of the meeting.

10. Recommendations from Policy & Finance Committee

a) Recommendations were received from Policy & Finance Committee re. winners of the Civic Awards

The Chair also 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

b) Blackwood Rugby club flooding – BTC to access CIL to offer £12,000 on provision of receipts.

FOI submitted to see what is happening with regard to flood defences on the river.

Cllr Short has written to environmental services as he owns part of the land, and suggested the river is dredged to make it deeper. He has not had a reply. A follow up to this was requested and will be actioned by the clerk / deputy clerk.

It was unanimously agreed that £12,000 given to Blackwood Rugby Club to contribute towards flood defences on production of receipts for work carried out.

13. Vacancy on Town Council - Blackwood North Ward

The deadline for the Call of Election for the above Vacancy has passed, and the Returning Officer has advised that no such request has been received, received, Town Council can now

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proceed to advertise the opportunity for co-option. In consultation with the Mayor, a Co-option Notice has been placed on BTC Website and on the Noticeboard, requesting expressions of interest with a closing date of Friday 14th. November.

14. Need for Formal Resolution – Pension Scheme.

Formal Resolution is required to meet our Contractual Staffing Responsibilities by applying to become a Scheme Employer in the Local Govt. Pension Scheme (administered by Greater Gwent (Torfaen) Pension Fund) stating that the Clerk & Deputy Clerk are eligible to join the Scheme.

Next Steps – If Blackwood Town Council does go ahead and passes a Resolution for its staff to be eligible to join the LGPS, then the Pension Fund would need a copy of the Resolution and a letter from the Chair confirming that the Council will pay employer pension contributions to the Fund.

It was agreed unanimously to apply to join the scheme.

15. Commissions Draft Proposals for Electoral Arrangements in County Borough of Caerphilly

Consultation ends 7th. December 2025

No Changes for Blackwood this will remain with three seats.

14. Future Events Funding

A request has been received from CCBC Events Team to consider additional funding for Blackwood Events.

With the end of the SPF programme, the Team has been informed that for the next financial years there is not a guaranteed budget from CCBC to host town centre events.

The Town Council is requested to consider additional funding of between £42K - £54K, this could realistically be reduced by £20k, as this is currently budgeted for within current commitments, but this would still leave a shortfall of between 22k - £34k which would require an increase in Precept.

Blackwood Spring Fair 2026 is secure as that will be covered by SPF for this financial year.

It was agreed that the Events Team be informed that until budget discussions are fully underway, the only commitment that can be given, at this stage, is the continuation of the £20k.

17. Office Security – Internal Door

The Mayor stated that two extremely expensive quotes have been received, with one to follow. Alternative solutions will be looked at.

Discussion took place regarding the precept increase. This will be looked at in the whole and brought to policy and finance committee.

18. Photocopier - quotes

Cllrs asked for comparison of the costs for printing and compare this to the proposed new photocopier charges. It was agreed to provide a comparison of costs.

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19. Planning Applications

The following Planning applications have been received since the last meeting –

Case Ref. 25/0659/RET: Location: 26 Caernarvon Place Cefn Fforest Blackwood P12 1DB

Proposal: Retain Pergola at rear of property

Case Ref. 25/0685/HH: - Location: Maes-y-garn Maesruddud Lane Blackwood NP12 0AG

Proposal: Erect two storey side gable extension and detached garage outbuilding

Proposal : Erect a 75 inch, sub-surface mounted, outdoor, double sided digital totem

Dragon Circle High Street to Asda Steps Blackwood GRID REFERENCE - 317513(E) 197403(N)

20. Reports

Events Committee -

- (a) Remembrance Services Arrangements – all arrangements have been finalised for Sunday 9th and Friday 7th November.
- (b) Civic Awards Evening - plus one and two other guests – head count on who can attend .Councillors and nominees will be contacted this week as BMI need numbers before 5th November.
- (c) Planned Christmas Events – Pipe Band have disbanded, and the sleigh is off the road this year. JH is trying to get the fire station sleigh. There is a meeting on Thursday 6th November with the events team.

21. Other Matters

a) It was agreed that the clerk and deputy clerk could attend the One Voice Wales / SLCC training course.

b) Cllr Dix – brought up that there was money set aside by the developers when the houses were built so enquiries are being made to try and track this down.

Meeting closed 20.01pm.

Signed *Cllr George Etheridge* Date 19/12/2025

Cllr G. Etheridge, Mayor