



Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12th January 2026, at Blackwood Town Council Offices

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

Attended digitally: Councillors K Williams, D Box

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

1.To receive Apologies for Absence.

Councillors R Mills, M Gwynne

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

[Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Clerk.]

No declarations provided at this point.

3. Police Report – A report has not been submitted on this occasion.

4. Mayoral Announcements – none submitted on this occasion.

5. County Borough Report

Cllr K Etheridge OBE

1 Pobl Development Rear Coronation Road – I am still receiving queries from residents in regard working on site here from residents who are still unable to gain access to their garages

2 Understand prior to Christmas the Road past Cwmgelli will be closed, and traffic lights are in operation for 12 weeks because of the installation of drainage pipes by Taylor Wimpey

3 The planning application for the HMO Albany Road was passed unanimously despite a petition of 200, and 80 letters of objections from residents and will now proceed (seems no interest in a judicial review)

4 The residents involved in the BMX Track has been given all the information with another petition being submitted but there seems little interest in this regard at the present time



5 The biggest disappointment was the drop in footfall in all the towns in CCBC week commencing 23/12/2025 2500 named petition requesting 2-hour free car parking charging which was rejected by Councillors 31 votes to 1,1 and the motion which I introduced was rejected - Other Council introduced this to help High Street and Traders during the festive period

6 Still no response from the Ministers about the Persimmon Development following a letter I sent in October it's only been several years

7 Members will recall a meeting between the employment minister MP , and Leader of Council a few months ago at the BMI where know members were invited or informed (County or Town Councillor were invited) despite two letters to the Minister and the MP no response has been received despite a list of questions so I have given up pursuing this matter – most disappointing

8 No complaints whatsoever about the development above Iceland and opposite the Gym in regard the building of flats

9 Queries in regard the bank rear of William Street behind the High Streetcar Park which I have taken up with Highways

10 Major Social Service and Hospital query which has been submitted to Council, Health Board and Ombudsman

Finally, many other queries from other Wards which have been forwarded on to the respective Councillors

Cllr A Farina Child's

Councillors Report:

1. Major issues at Cwmgelli again. Contractors on the TW Site damaged the main gas pipe that resulted in loss of gas supply to residents at Cwmgelli.
2. Flooding at Cwmgelli from the TW Site also remains a significant on-going issue.
3. HMO Albany Rd was passed at planning despite a petition submitted to CCBC by Kevin, a statement submitted to Planning by Nigel, and objections raised at the Planning Meeting by Myself and Mr Phil Bolton.
4. Kevin has submitted the following Petitions.
 - a. Petition to request Free Car Parking over the Xmas Period.
 - b. Petition in relation to the old BMX Track
 - c. Petition in relation to the Charter.
 - d. Petition against the HMO.
5. Homeless individuals remain an issue.



6. On-going issues at the Bus Station (George can inform you of these issues)
NB The Temporary Traffic Lights at Cwmgelli will only be in situ when engineering work is planned or in progress. This will be carried out in a phased approach that could possibly take up to March 2026 to complete.

6. Correspondence –

General

LGPS Starter Pack, pensions for clerk / deputy clerk

Information from Blackwood Rugby Club on cost of flood defences

CCBC

Information on Community Asset Transfer Evening 25th Feb 6pm Penallta House

Thank You from Rebecca Barrett to Town Council for providing prizes for the Elf Trail competition

Notification of tax base figure for 26/27

Notice of Special Community Council Liaison Sub Committee to discuss draft budget proposals

26th January, Penallta House, 6.00pm to 8.00pm

Footfall figures for December

One Voice Wales

Senedd Disqualification order

Improving our local places-Welsh case studies and planning updates seminar. 19th March 10.30 -1.30 on Teams £53 per person

Notice of Annual General Meeting 21st January, 6.00pm-8.00pm on Teams

Notice of Area Committee Meeting 28th January on Teams

7. Schedule of Payments

Payments Made/Due for Payment



Supplier	Description	Amount
Poundland	Carol Concert	6.00
Blackwood Con	Carol Concert	15.20
B and M	Carol Concert	23.30
Asda	Carol Concert	36.96
PO12	Post Office	36.00
J Griffiths	Office Supplies	31.88
KLA Dance	Xmas Fair	125.00
British Gas	Gas/Electric	£19.96
Recrock	Xmas Fair	£125.00
Playworks	Payslips	£20.00
Oakdale Silver Band	Mayor's Concert	£150.00
Nathan Bram Trading	Carol Concert Catering	£231.00
Amazon	Office Supplies	£14.60
Amazon	Office Supplies	£32.20
Blackwood Central- Mynyddislwyn Choir	Mayor's Concert	£150.00
Amazon	Office Supplies	£14.37



CCBC	Council Tax	£625.00
Dwr Cymru	Water	£77.73
Samba Gales	Xmas Fair	£500.00
Canva	IT -Graphic Design Tool	£340.00
Blackwood Garden Centre	Christmas Tree	£340.00
Woolleys	Flowers	£40.00
Woolleys	Flowers	£120.00
Salaries	Clerk/Deputy Clerk	£2,543.16
Bebb, Tasker and Sucksmith	Office Rental December	£960.00
Bebb, Tasker and Sucksmith	Office Rental January	£960.00
LGPS-Greater Gwent	Employer Pension Contributions(includes arrears)	1,814.52

CANVA – a query raised on the cost. Mayor explained it is an annual cost for graphic design software. This explanation was accepted.

No other concerns were raised on the schedule of payments.

8. To receive, approve and sign Minutes of the last Council meeting 1st December 2025.

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

9. Matters Arising



Footfall – Cllrs expressed concern that footfall is half of what it used to be. They believe this is due to a combination of matters, such as increased business rates, taxes, services, NI contribution. Cllrs have visited businesses and the increased parking charges are having an adverse effect. Cllrs expressed their disappointment that these increased charges were agreed with very few objections from county councillors. They will look to challenge these charges after six months when the time frame allows. It is worrying that CCBC doesn't appear to be listening, and business owners have stated it is killing the high street with some afraid their business will not last the year.

Cllrs expressed that details to be considered are that there is no consistency within the car parks; some being cheaper than other, the payment is not transferable between car parks while visitors may wish to move around the town at their convenience. Other towns are offering a portion of the parking time free. Removing the one hour at 40p has had a negative impact and Cllrs would like the footfall figures and the income from parking charges analysed to demonstrate the impact it has had.

Cllrs also expressed that the traffic wardens within the area are not allowing any form of discretion and are not allowing any drop off's and zero waiting times even for businesses. Cllrs would like clarification of what the legislation and protocol is for each part of town.

10. To Receive the Minutes and Recommendations of the Policy and Finance Committee held on 8th December 2025

The minutes were approved, to be signed by the Deputy Chair on this occasion.

11. Precept Proposals

The chair clarified that the amounts being discussed are the ANNUAL increase and not a weekly cost. The figures presented have already been discussed in the policy and finance meeting and the recommendation from that will now be presented. Background information circulated previously showed the options for three different increases, 25, 30 and 35 which at Band D equates to 48p, 57p or 67p per week. 29% of properties would pay no increase at all. The recommendation from Policy and Finance was for an increase of £35.00 (67 p per week on Band D properties).

Cllrs expressed concern that the cost of living has gone up considerable over the last few years with families requiring food banks, and queried what costs CCBC are passing onto the town council. The winter and spring fair will not be funded by CCBC from 2027 and the town council will be required to pay the full cost for these events, and the summer beach party that the town currently holds

The mayor explained that at present some costs have stayed the same. The staffing cost has not increased substantially as two part time staff now do the role of one. The office rent is frozen until 2027.



The clerk explained that pension contributions are now required to be made by the town council.

There was a lengthy discussion amongst the councillors. They wanted to know what we would be able to fund with the increased precept costs and would like it to be documented what any additional funds would be spent on. A rise to £35 per annum for band D properties will allow the town to still fund the three events residents have now come to expect, it will also allow some other events to be set up such as events for older residents or youths. This will also allow the town council to add money to reserves to fund additional services that CCBC are likely to offload in the future. If the precept is not raised by this amount the town council will need to use money from its reserves. Other town councils are saving money in anticipation of taking over services from the county when required and it is felt that BTC also needs to be able to do this to sustain the events and services we currently offer for the community.

The precept has not been raised substantially for a number of years, and income has fallen behind that of other towns. If we want to continue to provide and grow the events for Blackwood residents the precept must increase. All councillors stated they realised it needed to be increased but the question was by how much. Councillors were reminded that politics and its influence is not to be considered by the town council.

Councillors want the residents consulted on what they would like the money spent on. Councillors were advised that a survey has already been drawn up, its questions were shared and will be emailed following the meeting. If councillors would like to make amendments, they need to return the comments by Friday. The aim is to launch at the Spring Fair, at the end of February (28th) so we can ask people to complete it there as well as online.

A newsletter / press release will also be published at the appropriate time on social media.

Councillors are concerned that with rising costs from the police, fire, county etc any increase we make must be documented and funds used wisely.

Cllr Dix requested an amendment to the motion that the precept will increase by £30 rather than £35. This was seconded by Cllr Box and Cllr Farina-Childs, a vote was taken. Cllr Dix, Cllr Box and Cllr Farina Childs voted to increase the precept to £30. The motion failed and so the original motion was voted upon.

Recorded vote on the proposal to increase the precept by £35.

Proposed by Councillor A Short and seconded by Councillor Carol Erasmus.

Councillors	For	Against	Abstain
G Etheridge	x		
J Griffiths	x		
K Jones			
C Erasmus	x		



K Williams	x		
N Dix		x	
A Short	x		
K Etheridge	x		
P Cook	x		
A Farnia Childs		x	
D Box		x	
D Davies	x		
C Clark	x		

Cllr G Etheridge, K Etheridge, C Clark, D Davies, J Griffiths, K Williams, A Short, C Erasmus, K Jones, P Cook voted for this increase and the motion was passed.

It was agreed that the discussion for precept levels for financial year 27/28 will be started earlier at December Town Council to allow more time for additional information to be gathered if needed.

12. Section 6 Biodiversity Report

The clerk explained that TC is obligated to have a Biodiversity plan, no plan has been submitted for the past three years. Even though no plan was in place we had to report on our impact for biodiversity. There has been a suggestion that it may be linked to auditing requirements in future years. Cllr Dix & Farina Childs stated they were previously part of a sub-committee and would be interested in contributing in the future. The clerk explained there is an online workshop on this topic, this Thursday being run by One Voice Wales, which anyone can attend, she will send all councillors the link.

13. Planning Applications

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 Change the use of first floor from Retail (A1 Use) to 2 No. studio apartments to include the addition of 2 roof lights to front pitch and 2 windows to rear elevation. Create new entrance door at ground floor level for access to apartments. Retain the ground floor as A1 use Unit 3 The Market Place Blackwood NP12 1AU GRID REFERENCE - 317388(E) 197097(N)

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 Erect side extension over existing garage 8 Cwrt Y Coed Blackwood NP12 1GL GRID REFERENCE - 316996(E) 196966(N)

14. Events

Feedback- Carol Concert

It was agreed that it was a very good event but that in terms of catering, in future there is a need to reduce the amount of food we supply, catering for 75 people at the most and not providing fairy cakes.



Dates for 2026 Events,

Saturday 28th February 2026 is the Big Welsh Festival
Saturday 18th July 2026 Blackwood Beach Party
Saturday 21st & 28th of November 2026 Lantern Workshops
Monday 23rd of November 2026 Civic Awards Evening
Tuesday 24th of November 2026 is the Mayors Concert @ BMI
Saturday 28th of November 2026 Winter Fair and Xmas Light turn on
Thursday 3rd of December 2026 Lantern Parade and Carol Concert

Friday 20th November centenary for the cenotaph. Would like as many members as possible to attend. Invitations have been sent to various dignitaries including an approach to the King / Prince William.

The town council will have a stall at each event this year, and it would be appreciated if councillors are able to help staff this. Questionnaires will be available on the stalls in the spring and winter fair for residents to complete a physical copy. The survey will also be circulated on social media and with a QR code to direct people to complete online. It will also be displayed on the notice board and in local businesses. We only require the survey to be completed by Blackwood residents and so will need filter this information via the post code provided.

A discussion followed regarding the date of the Civic awards as councillors would like to see the event in the Spring, early summer. This year BMI has been unable to accommodate this, but we could request a change for 2027. Councillors suggested there are other venues that could also be considered. Others want to support the BMI as they were recently under threat of closure.

The mayor was thanked for all the work he has put into this event and the others throughout the year.

As the Garden centre required payment for the Christmas tree this year, whereas it has normally been donated, we will research the feasibility of having a tree planted opposite the library by the poppy. It could also be used at points during the year for other events such as a remembrance tree. This will also feed into our biodiversity plan.

15. Scribe Accounting System

The clerk explained that all accounts are paper based at the moment. We have explored three possible systems and have agreed that we find the Scribe system the most suitable. It is also the cheapest option. Both the clerk and deputy clerk provided feedback as they have been working with a free trial. Cllr K Williams also offered comments on the three systems that had been investigated.



Councillors agreed that the Scribe system could be purchased at a cost of £349 for the initial startup and £ 38 per month with no commitment to a set time period.

AOB

Training – the deputy mayor expressed that there are several training courses available and feels it is important that councillors are well informed. The deputy clerk shared that there are some important modules that are recommended for all councillors complete and that we can investigate holding the training in the office for all councillors at the same time rather than individuals having to sign up online. All councillors were keen for this to happen at convenient dates.

Councillors’ biographies– the deputy clerk has shared questions that we would like councillors to complete. There is no obligation to complete but we are trying to build our social media presence and build a connection with local residents. This is a way of doing that with councillors sharing information such as why they became a councillor and what their priorities are. Councillors agreed they would complete and return this.

16. Date of Next Meetings

Council: 2nd February, Policy and Finance:19th January

Closed meeting 8.20pm.

Signed

Date

Cllr G Etheridge, Mayor