



***Draft Minutes of the Blackwood Town Council Meeting held on 2nd
February 2026, at Blackwood Town Council Offices***

Present in person: Councillors G Etheridge - Mayor,

J Griffiths Deputy Mayor -

Councillors P Cook, C Erasmus, K Jones, C Clark, M Gwynne, A Farina Childs, G Etheridge

Attended digitally: Councillors K Etheridge, J Griffiths, K Williams, D Box, R Mills

Also in attendance: M Betts (Town Clerk/ RFO), R Davies (Deputy Town clerk/ Deputy RFO) Member of the public.

1.To receive Apologies for Absence.

Councillors D Davies. A Short, N Dix.

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

Crime - Data shows an overall decrease in recorded crime across the Blackwood ward during January when compared to December. There are no noticeable trends or patterns, and the reduction has been observed across several categories. Despite a positive trend police will continue to monitor patterns closely and maintain proactive patrols and engagements to ensure community safety.

Anti-social behaviour – this has seen a slight increase when compared to December. The rise has been noted and is being actively reviewed to understand contributing factors. Officers are responding through targeted patrols and working in partnership with local agencies.

There are several targeted operations taking place in the Blackwood areas. These are aimed at tackling specific areas such as anti-social behaviour, safe drinking and violence against women, tackling the use of e scooters / e bikes and illegal parking.



4. To receive, approve and sign Minutes of the last Council meeting 12th January 2026.

Approved and signed by the chair in the presence of the council.

5. Matters arising from previous minutes.

No matters arising from the minutes.

6. To receive Draft Minutes of the Policy & Finance meeting 19th January 2026

Minutes noted.

7. Reports

A. Mayor's report: no report B. Clerk/ RFO Report

The past month has required a lot of work related to the budget and setting it for the coming year. There has been a focus on expanding the council's profile on social media, with spotlights on businesses, bios for councillors and newsletters. Councillors were reminded of the up-and-coming spring fair - Big Welsh festival. Councillors were asked if they could spend some time manning the stall which will be in the high street. The offices will be open and used as a quiet space. Promotional materials have been ordered and will be available to give out on the day.

C. County Councillors' Reports

1. We have received an avalanche of complaints in relation to the tto's in regards the Pobl Development at the rear of Coronation Rd.
2. Missed Bin Collections are occurring again.
3. Contaminated water entering the Sirhowy River.
4. Issues with the new speed ramps on Sunnybank Rd.
5. CCTV monitoring being reduced. Kevin put a motion forward at Full Council, but the Monitoring Officer and several Cllrs objected to this as the Monitoring Officer stated that the Motion was "Premature
6. Grove Park Persimmon development, supporting residents re WAG decision process/ press statement in opposition to the development.
7. Reporting fly tipping in the town centre.



8. Reporting vandalism to lighting columns
9. Movement on the Persimmon Houses on Grove Park might be worth council putting in their objections by 23/2/26 shall report at meeting
10. Number of complaints gone into council phase 1 Highways matters from residents; clearing over drains promised within 10 days over 1 month ago, FOI resident submitted on 10th October not dealt with until 27/1/26 breach of 20 working days – with information commissioner to issue a formal complaint notice
11. 2. 91 million spent on PFI Contract for schools
12. Budget cuts on Agenda for Community Council to put their views in – will report at meeting (18 minutes meeting lasted at Council offices with Town Council hardly any questions most disappointing – they really need to up their game)

D.Representative Report

Feedback from One Voice Wales AGM this is the first time the meeting was quorate and went ahead. Time was spent discussing the constitution as this needs to be tighter. OVW will be meeting with the Senedd and so it was suggested that the clerk/deputy log the councils concerns and send these to Cllr Clark who can forward them to OVW for representation.

Cllr Etheridge highlighted the closing date for representatives for the proposed 300 houses is 23rd February and since there were hundreds of objections logged by residents, he requested that the town council write an objection to planning on their behalf.

Councillors attended the Special liaison meeting with the town and community council in Ty Penallta's to discuss the proposed budget. The whole meeting lasted 18 minutes and there was little challenge to the proposed budget by other councils. OVW representative was asked if she could raise this with One Voice Wales, as it was felt if town councils want to be involved and informed by the Local authority there needs to be more engagement and challenge offered.

The local authority has sent out a survey regarding the usefulness of the meetings but there are only 2 questions and no opportunity to expand on why they may or may not be useful. It was suggested that the Clerk contact the Borough Liaison Officer regarding the value of the survey. (The survey did in fact contain more questions).

8. Finance items

Schedule of payments.



Supplier	Description	Amount
British Gas	Gas	£227.39
British Gas	Electricity Bill	£71.68
Notetop Office Solutions	White Paper	£80.64
Big Bear Promo	Promotional Items	£1,272
Traditional Signwriting Services	New Honours Board plus addition of names	£802.00
GRC Plumbing and Heating	Investigate and resolve radiator issues	£144.00
Blackwood Town Council	Salaries Clerk and Deputy Clerk	£2845.50
Elsburys	Christmas Lights Call outs/Repairs	£618.96
CCBC	Contribution to Spring Fair	£3,000
Internal Systems Wales	New Fire Door between reception and main offices	£837.60
Plan.com	Mobile Phones	£56.00
Ty Hafan	Mayor's Charity 2024	£1,307.22



Wales Air Ambulance	Mayor's Charity 2025	£867.00
Ogi	Broadband/Phones	£204.60
J S Lee	Repair to Steps	£216.00
K and R Print	Extra Orders of Service for Remembrance	£220.00
Katherine Watkins- Playworks	Payroll	£20.00
Case Graphics	Door Nameplate	£27.29
Blackwood RFC	Flood Defenses	£12,000

The CCBC events team has asked for contribution of £3000 to fund the Big Welsh Festival. This has been discussed in Policy and Finance and is now proposed to Council for consideration. Contribution, as requested, was agreed.

A request to purchase additional laptop as the others are now used by the clerk / Deputy, was agreed.

Photocopier. Costs were discussed for a 5 year term. Cllrs requested that the Clerk/deputy find out the cost of a reduced term of 2/3 years.

Monitoring Report to Period 31/12/25/ Out turn, Budget Setting for 2026/27 & Medium Term Strategy

Current Council Tax Base 2026/27 £3,109.53 at Band D (compared with £3,086.45 for current year)

Monitoring Report/Out turn for 2025/26

The Anticipated Out- turn of £147,836 is an over spend of £33,136 on the original budget, whilst an Anticipated income of £103,207 is £8,617 more than budgeted



which results in a likely requirement of £44,629 to be taken from balances rather than the originally estimated £20,110 (£24,519 overspend).

The over spend on Expenditure is due in the main to £12,000 on Grants to Local Organisations reflecting the agreed Payment to Blackwood RFC for Flood Defence Works (CIL), £10,560 Office Shutters/ Internal Safety measures (CIL) & £8,145 Works on Remembrance Garden / Poppy/ Flagpole, with other minor overspends (including Mayors Charity £1,522) being offset by savings of £2,050 on Beach Party & £2,000 on Bi Elections. The Increased Income was due in the main to £500 Interest, £4,072 CIL, £2,100 CCBC Xmas Market Reimbursement & £1,522 Mayors Charity

Budget requirements 2026/27

The proposed budget for next year, 2026/27 is based on current spending patterns, plus inflationary increases on some expenditure heads. It also reflects the Council's long standing decisions to continue the provision of hanging baskets, the GAVO Volunteer Awards Evening and ongoing Summer Event / Carol Concert together with Grants to Voluntary Organisations, including Turn the Town Pink in support of the Breast Cancer Unit at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (£250), whilst also including a budget of £2,300 to provide assistance at the Remembrance Day Service & maintenance of Garden, which has improved so much over the past three years and now surely better reflects and honours the memory of our town's people that gave the ultimate sacrifice.

It also includes budgetary provision for the continuation of the Civic Awards Evening in the sum of £2,000, and also £1,300 for the continued provision of Christmas Selection Boxes to Blackwood & Libanus Schools (in recognition of their continued support of Remembrance Services & Carol Concert) A budget of £1,000 is also included for potential replacement/ upkeep of defibrillators in town.

The budget also reflects the decisions taken regarding staffing (including pension contributions) and a presence of Town Council Offices within the High Street.

Christmas Lighting has been a major point of contention of late, with the request to remove festoon lighting from lamp posts across the High Street. This coupled with the fact that our current decorations are now in need of replacement has prompted the need to include budgetary provision of £27,500 to renew existing lamp post decorations and look to find a solution regarding the festoon lighting (thankfully Town Council has been prudent over the years and accrued £22,457 in Reserves for this particular purpose and can now be allocated to same)

Provision is again included for 2026/27, and future years in respect of the potential Contributions to Members Expenses, and assumes some 100% of members will



claim all entitlements (£156 plus additional £52). £3,500 is also included for next year in support of the Members /Staff Training Programme, Conference Attendance etc.

Furthermore, it will be for the Council to determine each year whether or not Special Allowances will be paid in respect of Chairs of Committees, Level of Payments to Mayor/ Deputy Mayor and whether Attendance Allowances are introduced. No such provision is included at this point.

With Town Council elections due in May 2027, and every likelihood of many, if not all wards being contested, it is thought prudent to build up a Reserve to cover likely costs and £5,000 has been earmarked for this eventuality.

At the last Policy & Finance Committee Meeting and subsequent Council Meeting, members agreed to support the Christmas Market & Spring Events in town, after Caerphilly Borough Council in their wisdom had decided they were to discontinue, due to budget pressures. As a result, budgets of £18,000 have been included for each next year. Members also supported the view that Town Council should look to better promote itself, and provision has, therefore, been included for the provision of a Newsletter to each household and the purchase of promotional materials/ website etc. to achieve same.

Furthermore, reflecting members desire to ascertain what our residents would like from Town Council via a survey, it is considered prudent to include a budget to support this initiative,(not wanting to raise expectations and not be able to deliver) and £20,000 is therefore earmarked for Projects to Aid Wellbeing of Residents.

Precept Requirements 2026/27

Members have had numerous papers and discussions regarding the need for an increase in Precept levels, and the decision to an increase of £35 to £65 per annum as Band D properties has been reflected in the attached report.

With Expenditure, reflecting the decisions taken & points raised above, estimated to be £232,770, the Precept is anticipated to raise £202,120, and even with other projected income from Interest & Lettings of £2,500, a sum of £28,150 is still required from Balances/ Reserves to deliver a Balanced Budget (£22,457 from Special Projects & £5,693 from Other Reserves)

9. Planning Matters

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 78

planning@caerphilly.gov.uk 14 January 2026 LOCATION: 79 High Street, Blackwood, NP12 1BA,. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT: Retain and complete the



change of use from commercial to A1 (Shops) APPELLANT(S): FM Global
PLANNING APPEAL REFERENCE: CAS-04563-T3B6Q3

10. Policies, Governance & Compliance.

None at the moment but policies will go to policy and finance and then be submitted, if approved.

11. **Correspondence.**

Planning Aid Wales: Upcoming events

CCBC

Agenda and papers for Special Liaison Meeting 26th January: Draft CCBC Budget proposals

Notification of installation of new noticeboards in Blackwood

Information on consultation on Air Quality Strategy

Footfall figures for January

Information on regulations from Christmas Lights installations

Notification of tables for BTC at forthcoming events

Request to include a lantern parade as part of the procession for the Christmas Lights switch on

Request for a contribution of £3,000 for the Spring Fair, with the same amount being allocated back to the Beach Party.

Information on Code of Conduct Training for newly elected members

Information on Pride in Place Funding

One Voice Wales

Reminder re Annual General Meeting on 21st January 2026

Information on Town of Culture Funding

Information re Area Committee Meeting held on 28th January 2026

Information from Biodiversity Seminar held on 15th January 2026

12. **Community Issues/ Projects.**



1. Christmas lights – A meeting was held with CCBC Highways Officer regarding the health and safety rules associated with festoon lights. These will be taken down in the next few months. The lights on the lamp posts will meet the agreed criteria.
2. The new electronic notice board has been installed. The Clerk/deputy have been asked to find out who is the point of contact to advertise and its cost.
3. Clerk/ deputy have been asked to approach the Town Centre Management team and ask are they planning any initiatives to assist with the falling foot fall figures. It was noted that when councillors have visited local businesses they are concerned about the increased parking charges and business rates.

It was requested that the One Voice Wales representative ask the Welsh Government on the councils behalf how they are planning to assist local businesses. It was felt that Town Council should be lobbying more and take action – representative to lobby OVW and ask them to represent to the WG.

4. Concerns were raised regarding interpretation boards outlining local history being removed. The Mayor commented that these were due to be replaced

13. Clerks Working Hours

The deputy clerk works Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 10am – 3pm.

The clerk works (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 10am-3pm).

14. Date of Next Meeting:-

Policy and Finance: Monday 16th February 6.30pm

Full Council: Monday 2nd March 6.30pm

Councillors are reminding that training has now been booked for the recommended modules. This is bespoke training and will take place in the chambers. It will take place on: - 9th February – The council as an employer

9th March – Understanding the law.

It was highlighted that there are six modules that form core training as all councillors need to appreciate, we have responsibilities and it is essential that all are trained to deal with these. This will be discussed at Annual Council.

