



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24th JULY 2024 AT 6.30 PM.

Pursuant to the requirements of Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the meeting was held on a hybrid basis in the Council Chamber at 101, High Street Blaenavon and remotely.

In attendance:

Councillors: N. Matthews (In the Chair) L. Cowles, A. Jones, T. Porter, M. Wheeler, S. Templeton, S. Keen, L. Evans, I. Parfitt, A. Lewis, A. Beavan.

Officers: Kevin Warren (Chief Officer), Sophie Johnson (Community Wellbeing Development Officer), Kerry Jones (Assistant Chief Officer)

Visitors: Ashleigh Taylor (World Heritage Group, online), Mair Sheen (THP Project Manager).

Members of public: None present.

The Full Council meeting was opened at 6:30pm by the Mayor Cllr Nathan Matthews who welcomed everyone and expressed thanks for attendance.

1. To receive any questions from the public.

None received.

2. To receive and accept apologies.

The Chief Officer informed the chairperson that the following apologies had been received

- Cllr Hunt

It was proposed by Cllr Beavan and seconded by Cllr Keen that the apologies be accepted.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Apologies accepted.

3. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Templeton – Item 18 – Personal
- Cllr Lewis – Item 5 – Personal
- Cllr Matthews –Item 5 – Personal
- Cllr Jones – Item 5 – Personal
- Cllr Parfitt – Item 9 - Personal

4. To receive an update from Ashleigh Taylor (Chairperson of the World Heritage Group) relating to Heritage Day 2024.

Ashleigh provided members with an overview of the World Heritage Day 2024.

The event was a tremendous success with approximately 3,000 attendees. Feedback has been extremely positive, with the pleasant weather contributing to the event's success.

The event was split into different elements, the learning workshops, and the parade. Four workshops were delivered including Blaenavon schools, where participants created and wore props for the parade, which included 338 people from fifteen organisations. There was well over thirty craft and community stalls set up throughout the town.

Unfortunately, some stall holders failed to arrive on the day, and as a result, the planned stalls in the Workmen's Hall were missing.

The event offered a variety of entertainment including community groups, music, street entertainment, funfair rides and community games. Partnership working was particularly good this year with 31 organisations being involved including the Workmen's Hall, Torfaen Talks, Blaenavon Town Council, and many others.

The event was led by a project manager this year and twenty-four volunteers, with a core team of twelve people made up of volunteers and organisational staff. Initial health and safety concerns related to waste management and electrics were addressed prior to the event.

The day was fully funded by the shared prosperity fund with a budget for the event of £12,997 generating an income totalling £2,000.

Looking ahead to next year's 25th anniversary, there are plans to make the event into a weekend with multiple venues. Also, to make the team into a Community Interest Company (CIC).

Overall, the event was an enormous success with a strong turnout and excellent support. Feedback has been constructive with practicalities of stall positioning, parade timing etc. Final evaluations and consultations are currently being finalised; a copy can be forwarded when completed.

Cllr Matthews enquired about the Town Council's involvement in next year's 25th anniversary event and whether financial or other support from the Council would be needed, as this could be considered for the 2024/2025 budget.

Ashleigh confirmed that they would be seeking financial support from the Town Council but noted that it was too early to provide specific details at present.

Concerns were raised regarding the placement of stalls along Market Street. Cllr Keen reported receiving multiple complaints from residents about restricted access and the inconvenience caused on the day.

Ashleigh acknowledged that one complaint had been received regarding the stalls on Market Street but clarified that access to the properties was not restricted. The WHD group had discussed the complaint. Flyers will be issued in advance next year. This year, there was an official road closure, but this is something they will review for next year's event.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

5. To receive an update from Mair Sheen (THP Project Manager TCBC) regarding the conclusion of the Blaenavon Townscape Heritage Project.

Mair provided members with a presentation of Blaenavon THP.

The Town Council made an investment of £30K to support community delivery through revenue, enhancing community engagement and activities.

THP set targets for volunteer contributions, achieving £8,725, equivalent to over 1,200 hours of volunteer work. Additionally, bids seeking non-cash match contributions, met through volunteer participation resulted in a total achievement of £37,485.

This significant over achievement highlights the value and impact of volunteer contributions and demonstrates the value of the Town Council contribution.

Five out of nine capital builds were completed to high conservation standards, despite challenges like COVID-19, rising material costs, and partial funding / owners' contribution. These projects significantly improved Board Street and Market Street areas with the Market Tavern being a standout success.

The community activities, supported by the Town Council, have significantly enhanced awareness and appreciation of the conservation area and the town's history. Through a partnership approach, ten multi-faceted projects were delivered, demonstrating how partnership working can increase participation, enhance projects, and lay the foundation for future work.

Key achievements included:

World Heritage Day: Exceeded participation targets, with THP playing a mentoring role to expand community involvement.

Mynavon: Reached beyond targets, engaging both young and older people, which promoted literacy, Welsh language, historical awareness, and media interest. It also forms part of the Visit Blaenavon virtual tour.

Tapestry: Far surpassed engagement targets, now serving as a memory tool at Arthur Jenkins Care Home and inspiring additional projects like the Town Council QR code Easter Heritage Trail.

Photo Exhibition/Book: Engaged schools and volunteers, becoming a long-term educational resource.

Film Project - Hidden Histories: Developed young people's skills and confidence, now featured in the Workmen's Hall cinema and local schools.

Digital Tapestry: Evolved from static panels to an interactive digital exhibition, becoming a key interactive feature at the World Heritage Centre and inspiring future digital initiatives.

These outcomes highlight the importance of community involvement and partnership working, have increased knowledge and skills and has a lasting impact on the town's cultural heritage.

The THP strategically planned its community activities with an exit strategy in mind, focusing on what would remain valuable after the programme's conclusion. As a result, the THP developed tools and resources that can be used by the Town Council and other organisations, ensuring a lasting legacy of community engagement.

The partnership between the Town Council and THP has left a strong legacy of:

- Multi-agency collaboration.
- Effective tools for community engagement.
- High standards and vision for project development.
- Confidence in adapting and evolving projects.
- A belief in the community's ability to achieve goals.

The presentation highlighted the lasting impact of these contributions, both financially and through successful partnership working.

Mair thanked the Town Council for their support, both financially and for their collaborative involvement.

Members inquired about viewing the film Hidden Histories on YouTube, but it is not available online. However, copies will be available on USB.

Regarding the Market Tavern, Mair reported that an open day was successful, with ten businesses showing interest. One potential use is as an Air B&B, similar to a neighbouring

property. Additionally, 24 Broad Street has had a successful outcome, with a local business set to open there soon.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

6. Mayor's Announcements: To receive the mayor's announcements.

The mayor provided members with a summary of events and functions attended during the last month.

- 3 July 2024 - attended with the Chief Officer and the Deputy Mayor the One Voice Wales innovative practice conference in Builth Wells.
- 9 July 2024 - attended with the Deputy Mayor the One Voice Wales Gwent Valleys Committee meeting at Pontypool Community Council's Chamber.
- 12 July 2024 - inspected the flower beds and planters at the Cwmavon Road roundabout – credit was paid to Cllr & Mrs Parfitt for their efforts in improving the approach to the town.
- 14 July 2024 - opened the Mic Morris 10k race.
- 18 July 2024 - met with David Leech, TCBC, and Sharon Ford, Chair of the Blaenavon Workmen's Hall Ltd Board to discuss the Town Council's relationship with the Workmen's Hall.
- 19 July 2024 - met with Julie Davies of the Cardiff Capital Region and Keiran McGaughey of Like an Egg Productions to discuss a proposed film about the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, they would like to interview the mayor as part of the film.
- 21 July 2024 - attended the Blaenavon Town Council litter pick with seventeen bags of litter collected.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

7. Council Meeting: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 26th of June 2024.

The minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

It was proposed by Cllr Porter and seconded by Cllr Wheeler that the minutes be accepted.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Minutes approved as a true and accurate record.

8. Chief Officer's Update: To receive the Chief Officer's update.

The Chief Officer provided members with the following update:

Item 9 within the minutes as per the instructions from members the Chief Officer contacted Festive Lighting Company and updated them with the Council's determination to accept their quote on a three-year contract.

Item 11 within the minutes as per the instructions from members the Chief Officer invited Cllrs Yeowell and Slade to attend the Council's Finance meeting in September 2024 to provide members with an update relating to the community review.

Item 12 within the minutes as per the instructions from members the Chief Officer invited Stephen Vickers CEO for TCBC to attend a Town Council meeting to discuss the recently discussed Torfaen Charter. An update has not been received. A further request for attendance will be sent.

Item 13 within the minutes as per the instructions from members the Chief Officer has contacted Dan Morris at TCBC in relation to landlord's consent / planning to site the planter on the central reservation at Cwmavon Road roundabout. Dan is on leave until the 29th of July 2024. It will be followed up when he returns.

On the 2/7/24 together with Sophie, Cllr Templeton, Kevin Weaver, and Zoe Gibbs (TCBC) attended a meeting to discuss the planning for the proposed Veteran's Hub project. There will be a further update on this at item nine within the agenda.

On the 3/7/24 together with the Mayor, Cllr Wheeler, Kevin Weaver (TCBC) and Mr Walter Waygood attended the One Voice Wales Innovative Practice Conference. On behalf of the Council the Chief Officer delivered a 45-minute workshop to delegates relating to Community Engagement.

The feedback received has been excellent and again demonstrates where we are as a Council regionally and across the sector

Since the last meeting, the Chief Officer has held weekly briefing sessions with the mayor and deputy mayor discussing Council operational and financial matters together with operational meetings with his fellow officers relating to future planning and current projects.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

9. To receive Cllr updates regarding recent attendance at outside bodies committee meetings, together with any relevant community / partnership engagement.

Cllr Matthews updated members that on the 3rd of July 2024 he attended the OneVoice Wales Innovative Practice Conference at Builth Wells.

It was an informative session with much of the focus being on how councils can support ‘age-friendly communities,’ youth engagement, and support the cost-of-living crisis.

Blaenavon’s efforts in respect of cost-of-living initiatives was highlighted in the presentation. The potential for town and community councils to take active roles in these areas was highlighted.

A presentation by Cllr Tom Moses of Haverfordwest Town Council and Project Leader for the CWBR Youth Project in Pembrokeshire, which has engaged young people with community councils through fun and inclusive projects, which has involved 16– 25-year-olds in environmental initiatives and given them first-hand experience of how local politics can have influence in communities.

Resources for other town and community councils have been produced by the project and are available online. There is potential for Blaenavon Town Council to look at this as good practice to develop our own youth engagement.

On the 9th of July 2024 Cllr Matthews attended the One Voices Wales Gwent Area Committee meeting. A presentation was received from the Welsh Ambulance Service.

Cllr Glyn Morvan of Nantyglo and Blaina Town Council was elected Chairman and Cllr Chris Morgan of Cwmbran Community Council was elected Vice-Chairman.

Jane Mudd, the new Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent will be invited to the next meeting, or, in her absence, Chief Superintendent Dr Carl Williams of Gwent Police. Cllr Matthews updated members that the One Voice Wales Annual Conference is being held on 16th of October 2024, with the next National Awards Ceremony scheduled for 23rd of April 2025.

On 18 July, Cllr Matthews attended a meeting at Blaenavon Workmen’s Hall with David Leech, Strategic Director for Blaenavon Workmen’s Hall Ltd Communities at Torfaen County Borough Council, and Sharon Ford, Chairman of Blaenavon Workmen’s Hall Ltd.

An update from Cllr Matthews was provided to members.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the relationship between the Town Council and the Workmen’s Hall. The meeting was relatively constructive. From the perspective of Blaenavon Workmen’s Hall Ltd, it was felt that the relationship with the Town Council is somewhat strained.

It was suggested that the Town Council could be more supportive of the Hall and its volunteers, such as by liking and sharing the Hall’s material on social media and improving communication regarding projects.

David Leech proposed that quarterly meetings between the Mayor and the Chairman of the Workmen’s Hall Committee could enhance communication and facilitate discussions on

upcoming events and potential partnerships. The Chairman of the Workmen's Hall also reiterated that town councillors are welcome to attend the Workmen's Hall Ltd Board Meetings.

On behalf of the Town Council, Cllr Matthews highlighted the successful collaborations with the Hall, such as the Befriending Film Club, the Bronwen Lewis Concert, and the Christmas Market. It was emphasised that Blaenavon Town Council genuinely wants to hold events and activities in the Hall to support it as the main community venue in Blaenavon.

It was also expressed the Town Council's frustration with booking events at the Hall, citing the recent example of the proposed Blaenavon Town Council Shining Stars Music Academy concert. The Workmen's Hall Board declined to host this event after taking 25 days to respond to the booking request. David Leech and Cllr Matthews requested that the Chairman of Workmen's Hall ask the Board to reconsider, which the Chairman agreed to do.

Regrettably, the Chief Officer received a communication from the Board this morning (24th of July) stating: "This application has been further discussed by Board members. Due to the reasons outlined during the discussion with Cllr Matthews and Dave Leech on the 18th of July, we are unable to facilitate this booking."

While no specific reason was provided in writing, the Chairman of the Workmen's Hall Board indicated at the meeting on 18th of July that the Hall had previously had negative experiences working with Shining Stars Music Academy and there was anecdotal evidence of criticism from them within the community. Consequently, the Board was unwilling to accept the booking.

A discussion took place amongst members and the following matters were discussed at length.

Members inquired if any evidence of the alleged negative feedback from Shining Stars Music Academy had been presented at the meeting. Cllr Matthews clarified that the evidence was anecdotal, with no evidence produced at the meeting. Members perceived the issue as personal towards Rebecca Osmond and Shining Stars Music Academy, criticising the handling of the recent booking request as unprofessional.

Councillors strongly felt that the Workmen's Hall Board was letting down the children and community of Blaenavon by not allowing the concert to proceed in what is supposed to be a community building.

Concerns were raised about the managerial operations of the Hall, including issues of governance, the service level agreement, and the status of the lease. Cllr. Cowles inquired about these matters but was told he could not access the documents due to GDPR restrictions.

It was believed that a draft lease had been presented to the Hall in 2019, but it remained unsigned as of a few months ago.

Members discussed whether the day-to-day operations of the Hall were too demanding to be managed adequately by volunteers. They felt that a manager role should be created by TCBC to ensure the venue is used to its full potential.

Overall, Cllrs were appalled and strongly believed that a formal complaint should be made to TCBC regarding the refusal to book the joint event.

It was proposed by Cllr Lewis and seconded by Cllr Keen to make a formal complaint to TCBC regarding the refusal to book a joint concert with Shinning Stars Music Academy and Blaenavon Town Council at Blaenavon Workmen's Hall.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Complaint to be submitted to TCBC regarding Blaenavon Workmen's Hall Board Ltd

Cllr Wheeler informed members that alongside Cllrs Cowles and Templeton attended the World Heritage Day on 29th of June and took part in the parade. The event was well run, and an enjoyable day was had by all. Cllr Wheeler gave a closing speech at the end of the day's events.

Cllr Porter updated members on Blaenavon V.C. Heritage School, highlighting the introduction of a new high-tech digital map. This allows pupils to view Blaenavon covering the past 20 years.

Nursery intake this year has decreased with enrolment dropping to sixty, this has been seen across the borough. Pupil attendance has improved compared to last year, reaching 92%. All planned visits to comprehensive schools for year six pupils have been completed.

Fire health and safety issues are being addressed regarding evacuation of wheelchair users. A fire drill had been conducted and the people had safely exited the building with the help of friends. A new chair is being sourced from the local authority and training will be provided to staff.

Cllr Templeton updated members that he attended alongside Cllr Jones (online) the Local Partnership committee meeting held on 11th of July in the Civic Centre Pontypool. A brief discussion took place on sharing best practice and the possible use of local radio stations to share and inform communities the work of Town and Community Councils.

Cllr Templeton referenced to David Leech and Peter Jones that Blaenavon Town Council Annual Report had been sent to both but that the Council had not received any communication back from them. Cllr Templeton also raised a concern that he felt there was poor communication between TCBC and Town and Community Councils across the borough. Several Cllrs attending the meeting agreed.

The Charter was discussed, Cllr Templeton and other Cllrs attending the meeting believed it was not suitable for purpose. It was noted by David Leech that Blaenavon Town Council was the only council to provide feedback.

Cllr Templeton proposed that a central working group be set up by TCBC with a member from each town and community council forming part of the working group. He felt that TCBC were trying to withdraw from the Charter and emphasised that it was a TCBC Charter, and their involvement was essential.

On the 20th of July Cllr Templeton attended Crow Fest 2024 making use of the complimentary tickets. He praised Cwmbran Community Council for an excellent first event of this kind and encouraged members to attend next year.

On the 22nd of July the first Veterans' Support Hub took place at the Cons Club in Blaenavon. It was an excellent first meet with five Veterans' attending. Posters were given to attendees who had offered to distribute. Cllr Templeton gave thanks to everyone who helped set up the group.

Cllr Evans updated members that the Public Service Board last notification on the TCBC website was 05/12/2018. He had contacted David Leech and is awaiting an update.

Resolved: Members noted the updates.

10. To receive an update from Sophie Johnson - Community Development and Wellbeing Officer (July 2024)

Sophie provided members with the following update.

Organised June's Befriending Film Club, there were forty-one attendees. Have arranged July's film club, which takes place on Friday 26th. The film is Priscilla.

Attended World Heritage Day Saturday 29th June. Alongside TCBC officers erected the bunting and decorations that we created with community groups and Torfaen's Inspire team. Helped marshal the parade.

Attended meetings with fellow officers and councillors regarding creating a new Veterans' Support Hub.

The first session was successful with five veterans attending. Excellent feedback was received and the outlook for the group is promising.

Summer activities provided by the council for residents are now finalised including promotion and bookings. Activities include paddle boarding, swimming, family cookery sessions and a trip to St Fagans.

Sophie has also supported other organisations with their summer activities within the town.

Alongside fellow officers started the planning of the Christmas lights switch on and Christmas craft fayre events.

Worked in partnership with Torfaen Sports Development to launch the Community Kit Room project.

Held meetings with Wonder Cinema and Blaenavon Ironworks regarding the outdoor cinema event.

Joined members to photograph the town's flower planters and hanging baskets.

Had discussions with Torfaen Sports Development and the Active Living Centre to determine the best approach moving forward with Family Fit and Mother and Daughter sessions.

Attended an exhibition launch event at the Workmen's Hall highlighting the work produced over the last year as part of the Group GLO project, which Sophie was involved alongside Big Pit and pupils from BHVC and Ysgol Bryn Onnen.

Attended the One Voice Wales online seminar on Community Transport.

Continue to support, engage with, and attend various community groups to gather residents feedback and promote council services and projects.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

11. To receive, discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to a quotation received for the Town Council website 2024.

The Chief Officer shared to all members prior to the meeting a summary/quotation for the Town Council website. Two additional quotations will be obtained before a decision is made.

The council need to consider what they want from the website in terms of design and information.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

12. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding the Town Council Civic Event and Awards Evening 2024.

A discussion took place amongst members with regards to holding a Town Council Civic Event.

Cllr Jones proposed that a civic event and awards evening take place. This was seconded by Cllr Porter.

Cllr Matthews proposed the Workmen's Hall for the venue. This was seconded by Cllr Jones.

Cllr Matthews proposed the date: Friday 18th October 2024. This was seconded by Cllr Cowles.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Civic Event and Awards Evening 2024 to be held at the Workmen's Hall on October the 18th 2024 subject to booking conformation.

13. To discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to the criteria for Town Council Civic Awards 2024.

Cllr Matthews prepared a draft version of the application form for the Town Council Civic Awards, which included suggested changes to the nomination criteria. The draft was forwarded to all members prior to the meeting.

The proposed amendments covered eligibility restrictions, nomination requirements, the review and decision-making process, and the 2024 public nomination categories.

Cllr Matthews also proposed introducing the 'Blaenavon Town Council Special Awards,' dedicated to the memory of deceased prominent Blaenavon Councillors who made significant contributions to the community.

A discussion took place amongst members. A request was made for a list of Town Council Award recipients from the past five years. They also agreed to lower the age limit for youth recipients from 21 to 18 years.

The forms will be updated and made available in August, ahead of the September finance meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews that the civic award application form be updated with the agreed implementations. This was seconded by Cllr Jones.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Civic award application form to be completed.

14. To discuss, review and make any relevant determinations regarding the Family Fitness Project.

Sophie provided members with the following update:

The Family Fitness sessions initially had good attendance, but numbers have since dropped.

Discussions were held between Sports Development, Rachel Pugh, and Sophie to address the attendance issues and find a way forward. It was discovered that the current time and day of the sessions were not suitable for participants.

After negotiations, Sports Development agreed to fund 50% of the sessions, with the Town Council covering the remaining 50%.

It was suggested to reintroduce the Mum's and Daughters Fitness sessions on a weekly basis, with the new time set for Monday at 6 pm. The cost for term-time only sessions totals £1,368, with the Council's share being £684.

However, previous participants expressed a preference for year-round sessions, as they found it difficult to resume particularly after the summer break. The total cost for year-round sessions is £1,872, with the Council's contribution being £936 for one session per week.

Sophie recommended holding one session per week on Mondays at 6pm year-round, costing Blaenavon Town Council £936.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Wheeler and seconded by Cllr Cowles to support the project for the full year, subject to a six-month review.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Mum's and Daughters project authorised with a six-month review date,

15. To discuss and make a determination regarding a suitable date for the Xmas Lights switch on 2024.

A brief discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Keen and seconded by Cllr Cowles that the event take place on Friday 22nd of November 2024.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Christmas lights switch on event to take place on Friday 22nd of November 2024.

16. To discuss and make a determination regarding potential Town Council projects for allocation into the Project Action Plan 2024/25. Relevant updates or new projects as notified.

None received.

17. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding planning applications.

The Chief Officer had forwarded the planning application to members ahead of the meeting, there was three which presented as follows.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Tree Surgery
- **LOCATION:** 18 Upper Woodland Street Blaenavon

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Refurbishment of Fitting Shop into Guides welfare room
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit Blaenavon

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Refurbishment of Blacksmiths yard into guides welfare room
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

18. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding donation requests.

The Chief Officer forwarded one donation request to members prior to the meeting for their perusal.

Members discussed the donation requests, namely:

- **Cara Boddington – Blaenavon Scout Group.**

Cara requested financial assistance of £240 towards payment of rent for the scout hall.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Wheeler that the donation request be supported with a £240 award.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Members approved a donation request of £240. Chief Officer to facilitate the transaction and update Cara Boddington.

19. To receive, discuss and make any relevant determinations concerning items relating to correspondence.

None received.

20. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding an update from the appointed working group relating to the Assistant Chief Officer role and salary review-May 2024.

Item withdrawn ahead of the meeting and will be listed at a future council meeting.

Resolved: Motion will be listed at a future council meeting.

The Chief Officer requested permission from the mayor to present a matter before members which he explained was time sensitive.

This was authorised.

An email had been received from Julian Allen, Lead Advice and Guidance Mentor, TCBC requesting financial support for a school uniform event in Blaenavon.

It was proposed by Cllr Keen to support the request. This was seconded by Cllr Cowles.

Members were in agreement to support the project with a grant of £300 with the exception of Cllr Evans who abstained from voting.

Resolved – Grant of £300 authorised.

Meeting ended at 20.21 hrs.

Signed Chairman:

W. Matthews

Date: 25/09/24.