



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26th of FEBRUARY 2025 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: Cllr. N. Matthews (In the Chair) L. Cowles, M. Wheeler, S. Templeton, I. Parfitt, A. Lewis, J. Hunt.

Officers: Kevin Warren (Chief Officer), Kerry Jones (Assistant Chief Officer).

Visitors: Zed Rodgers and Jen Davies (co-option candidates).

Members of public: None present.

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

Cllr Matthews altered the running order of the agenda so that agenda item 4 followed agenda item 6 for continuity.

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 Beavan
- Cllr Porter

It was proposed by Cllr Hunt and seconded by Cllr Wheeler that the apologies be accepted.
All members in agreement.

Resolved: Apologies accepted.

3. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Matthews – Personal – items 5 & 6
- Cllr Hunt – Prejudicial – item 6. Personal – item 19
- Cllr Cowles – Personal – item 19

5. To receive presentations from co-option candidates for the role of Blaenavon Town Councillor.

Members received co-option presentations from Mr Zed Rodgers and Mrs Jen Davies.

The first presentation was from Mr Zed Rodgers, followed by Mrs Jen Davies. The Chairman thanked both candidates for their presentations individually.

Resolved: Members noted both co-option presentations.

6. To make a determination and ratify the appointment of a co-opted Blaenavon Town Councillor.

Cllr Hunt left the meeting at 18.47 hrs.

Members discussed the presentations from both candidates and agreed that each demonstrated strong qualities and different skills that could benefit the role of town councillor.

A vote was held, resulting in a tie with three votes each. The mayor exercised the casting vote. Jen Davies was selected as the successful candidate.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllr Cowles to ratify the appointment of Jen Davies as a Blaenavon Town Councillor.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Jen Davies appointed as a Blaenavon Town Councillor.

4. To receive a TCBC update from Ward Councillors.

Cllr Cowles provided the following update:

The next Full Council meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday, where the budget-setting process for 2025/26 will be discussed. A proposed 4.95% increase in council tax for Torfaen will also be considered.

Cllr Cowles reported that he had received an email from Caris Williams, Flood Risk Officer at TCBC, regarding a flood study conducted at Garn Lakes. As a result, TCBC will be conducting works starting Monday, 3rd March, for approximately 4–6 weeks.

Notices will be posted, and the lakes will remain open to the public during this time.

Additionally, concerns have been raised about the surfaces on the footbridges at Garn Lakes. Following a site meeting in 2024, a request was made for safer surfaces to be installed. TCBC has confirmed that, with the aid of grant funding, permanent non-slip surface boards will be installed by 31st March 2025.

Works at the Flower Park, including the installation of an access ramp and resurfacing of internal roads and paths, were completed on 11th February 2025.

A new picnic bench will be installed in the coming weeks, and the park fully reopened to the public on 14th February. The project was funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Cllr Cowles informed members that he had emailed Dave Leech regarding concerns over the World Heritage Ambassador visit, as neither ward members nor the Mayor, Cllr Matthews, had been invited. Fortunately, Cllr Matthews was able to attend at short notice, representing the Town Council and delivering a speech.

Mr Leech acknowledged Cllr Cowles's concerns and assured that they would be taken into account for future ambassador visits.

Cllr Hunt expressed concerns about the consultation process and the removal of trees at Garn Lakes. He also highlighted issues with the temporary bridge coverings and the overall management of the site, particularly the environmental impact of the tree removal.

Cllr Cowles acknowledged these concerns.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

7. 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.

- 3rd of February – met with Ashleigh Taylor to discuss World Heritage Day 25 plans.
- 12th of February – welcomed UK's Ambassador and delegate to UNESCO and gave a speech at Blaenavon Heritage Centre.
- 16th of February – attended the Town Council monthly litter pick.
- 22nd of February – attended the Town Council's Strategy Day.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

8. Council Meetings: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 22nd of January 2025.

Minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Minutes accepted as a true and accurate record.

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

The Chief Officer provided members with the following update:

Item 12 - TCBC have been contacted, and landlord consent forms had been submitted regarding the planting of a tree in The Flower Park for the Covid -19 Day of reflection.

A site meeting had taken place with Phil Grimes, TCBC and location for the tree and species decided.

Item 13 - As per instructions from members the response had been submitted to PEDW within the timescale specified. Confirmation had been received that it has been accepted.

Item 17 – Consulted with the utilities broker relating to the dual fuel tariff deal. This had been agreed with EDF energy for both gas and electricity and fixed for 3 years.

As per the determination made at the January 2025 FCM, £250 had been transacted to CALM via their Just Giving page.

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

Resolved: Members noted the update.

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

Cllr Templeton updated members. On 17th February he attended the Veterans' Support Hub, where a new member joined and expressed enthusiasm for getting involved. Additionally, Cllr Templeton's employers have shown support for engaging with the group, which will hopefully help boost attendance.

Cllr Hunt informed members that the Museum Trust had appointed two new Vice Presidents, including Cllr Matthews.

He also shared that he had been invited to represent Wales on the Museum Association UK, which will hopefully strengthen connections and networking opportunities both locally and beyond.

Resolved: Members noted the updates.

11. To receive an update from Sophie Johnson - Community Development and Wellbeing Officer (February 2025).

The Community Development and Wellbeing Officer's report for February 2025 was forwarded to all members prior to the meeting.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

12. To receive, discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to the key themes and immediate actions highlighted from the Town Council's Strategy Development Day held on the 22nd of February 2025.

Members stated that they found the day highly valuable, appreciating the informal setting that allowed for open discussions on ideas and plans. The session was seen as both positive and productive, with good actions established. There was a shared hope that similar strategy days could be held in the future.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

13. To appoint a Councillor representative to sit as a minor authority school governor at Ysgol Bryn Onnen Primary School (Four-year term).

Cllr Matthews explained to members that former Cllr Keen was the appointed Cllr representative at Ysgol Bryn Onnen.

Cllr Matthews asked if any member was interested in becoming the Town Council representative. No volunteers came forward during the meeting.

Cllr Matthews proposed deferring the decision to the March 2025 Full Council Meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Cowles.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Appointment of minor authority school governor to Ysgol Bryn Onnen deferred to March 2025 Full Council Meeting.

14. To appoint a Councillor as a signatory to Blaenavon Town Council's bank account and online banking authorisations.

Cllr Matthews explained to members that former Cllr Keen was an appointed signatory for the Town Council bank account.

Cllr Templeton volunteered to be the appointed fourth signatory.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Matthews that Cllr Templeton be the fourth signatory.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Cllr Templeton appointed as fourth signatory for the Town Council Bank Account.

15. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding the COVID-19 Day of Reflection on the 9th of March 2025.

The Chief Officer informed members that posters for the event had been distributed and shared on social media, with schools and Churches Working Together Group with an open invite for any resident within Blaenavon to attend.

Father Chris Walters has confirmed his attendance and is keen to support the Town Council on this event.

Cllr Parfitt has arranged the purchase of a Rowan tree from Abergavenny Garden Centre which will be delivered on Saturday morning in readiness for the mayor to plant on the day.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

16. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding quotations received relating to the implementation of a new Blaenavon Town Council website

Both website quotations were forwarded to members prior to the meeting.

The Chief Officer provided an overview of the quotations, outlining the proposals, content and costing including the annual hosting fees.

Members discussed both quotations and the requirements of the town council website.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles to instruct The Media Agency to update the Town Council website. This was seconded by Cllr Hunt.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: The Chief Officer to instruct The Media Agency to commence website design.

17. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding a letter of consultation received from TCBC, relating to consolidation order 2019 which incorporate amendments 11-14 (various roads speed limits).

Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) intends to introduce an Order under Section 84 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to amend speed limits in Blaenavon.

The proposed changes include:

- Reducing the speed limit from the National Speed Limit, 60mph to 40mph on a section of the B4246, Varteg Road, up to its junction with Forgeside.
- Reducing to 40mph limit from the Forgeside junction, Varteg Road along the B4246, Abergavenny Road, to a point north of its junction with Rifle Street.

- Increasing the speed limit from 20mph to 30mph on a section of the B4246, Abergavenny Road, from Rifle Street to King Street.
- Increasing the speed limit from 20mph to 30mph on Estate Road, including the entire length of the Gilchrist Industrial Estate.

Members discussed the potential impact of these changes on motorists and pedestrians, with particular concern for pavement conditions, accessibility, and crossing points near the Ironworks.

Cllr Hunt proposed supporting the reduction from 60mph to 40mph on the B4246 (Varteg Road and Abergavenny Road) but opposing the increase from 20mph to 30mph between Rifle Street and King Street. This was seconded by Cllr Templeton.

Members voted with five votes in favour, one against, and one abstention.

Cllr Matthews proposed retaining the 20mph speed limit near the Ironworks, including the Ironworks car park and the junction of North Street into Estate Road, while supporting the 30mph limit in the Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate and the remainder of Estate Road.

This was seconded by Cllr Wheeler.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to submit the objections and proposals to TCBC by 5th March 2025

18. 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.

The proposed project form was forwarded to members prior to the meeting.

Wonder Cinema & Heritage Railway Event.

Building on the success of last year's outdoor cinema event at Blaenavon Ironworks, it is planned to host another event in collaboration with Wonder Cinema and Blaenavon Heritage Railway on July 28th and 29th, 2025.

A meeting between Blaenavon Heritage Railway, Wonder Cinema, and the Town Council took place and was incredibly positive. The Railway are keen to work in partnership with the Town Council, with potential opportunity for a future Halloween event later in the year.

Blaenavon residents can purchase tickets at a special discounted rate of £5.00 each. These resident-only tickets will be available for purchase first, ahead of the general ticket sale.

Trains will run in the afternoons, and the tearoom will be open to support the event.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Wheeler to authorise the project.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Wonder Cinema & Heritage Railway Event authorised.

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

The planning applications were forwarded to members ahead of the meeting, which presented as follows.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Variation to planning application. To retain modular building.
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit, Blaenavon

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** 2 storey extension
- **LOCATION:** 8 Upper Coed Cae, Blaenavon

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Installation of 2 x heat source pumps
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit, Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

20. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding grant application requests.

None received.

Resolved: Members noted update.

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

The Chief Officer forwarded to all members the latest update from PEDW regarding the RWE wind turbine development proposal, received on 24th February 2025. This is for information only, and no action is required.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

Meeting ended at 19.47 hrs

Signed Chairman: *W. Matthews*

Date: 26/3/25.