



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26th of June 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: Cllr. N. Matthews (In the Chair) L. Cowles, M. Wheeler, S. Templeton, A. Jones, I. Parfitt, T. Porter, L. Evans (online)

Officers: Kevin Warren (Chief Officer), Sophie Johnson (Community Well-being Development Officer)

Visitors: None present

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 S. Keen – Unwell
- Cllr A Beavan – Work commitment
- Cllr J Hunt – Attending a project meeting for the National Slate Museum, where input as Amgueddfa Cymru EDI Champion is required.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Apologies accepted.

3. Declarations of Interest

None received.

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

The mayor provided members with a summary of events and functions attended in the past month.

- 6th June - attended D-Day 80 flag raising and proclamation service at Blaenavon Cenotaph.
- 6th June - attended the D-Day 80 evening service in St Peter's Church and Lighting of the Lamp of Peace service at Blaenavon Cenotaph.
- 23rd June - attended the town council community litter pick at flower garden and Giles Road areas.
- 24th June - attended Armed Forces week flag raising service at Blaenavon Cenotaph.
- 25th June - attended a meeting in the Council chamber with Deputy Mayor, Chief Officer, and Community Well-being Development Officer regarding strategic planning.

The mayor explained that he was unavailable to attend Heritage Day on 29th June due to a family commitment and that the Deputy Mayor would attend in his place.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

5. Council Meeting: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 22nd of May 2024.

The minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Templeton that the minutes be accepted. All members in agreement.

Resolved: Minutes approved as a true and accurate record.

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

The Chief Officer provided members with the following update:

Item 10 within the minutes. The annual return has been sent to Audit Wales via recorded delivery. The Chief Officer will update members accordingly regarding any further correspondence and status of the audit opinion.

Item 12 within the minutes. The annual report 2023/24 has now been completed. The Chief officer has requested six printed copies. These will now be available for public access via the website. This will be discussed further at item ten within the agenda.

Item 17 within the minutes as per the instructions from members, the Chief Officer has transacted £250 to Blaenavon Blues AFC and received notification and thanks from Matthew Cox.

On the **23/5/24** the Chief Officer represented the Town Council at a National Cost of living online seminar delivered by OVW. He presented a 30 minute overview of Town Council projects aligned to cost of living initiatives. The Chief Officer has forwarded to members the response from OVW regarding the presentation. This is another example of the Town Council's status both nationally and within the sector.

On the **29/5/24** the Chief Officer held an in person meeting in the Council chamber with Tim Monkton TCBC Foundation and Economy officer and Kat Fox – Madely Torfaen Markets. The meeting was to discuss and evaluate to date the artisan market in Blaenavon. Initial findings are that it could be busier, but these are early days, and the market needs a period of time to establish. A further meeting is planned for autumn 2024.

On the **6/6/24** together with fellow Cllrs the Chief Officer attended the D-Day 80 event at St Peter's Church. The event was outstanding which received positive feedback.

On the **12/6/24** the Chief Officer together with Sophie Johnson attended a teams meeting with representatives from Cadw and wonder cinema regarding the proposed outdoor cinema event at the iron works in August 2024. A quote has now been prepared by wonder cinema and costings supplied by Cadw. This will be an agenda item for discussion and determination at the July 2024 finance meeting.

On the **14/6/24** together with fellow Cllrs the Chief Officer attended Blaenavon Heritage School assembly to present the D-Day 80 poetry competition prizes.

On the **18/6/24** together with Cllr Wheeler, the Chief Officer held a site meeting with a representative from Blachere lighting regarding a quote for the Xmas light 2024. The quote has been received and this will be discussed further at item 9 within the agenda.

The hanging baskets have now been delivered and they will be erected across the Town by Chris Langford.

On the **3/7/24**, the Chief Officer will be representing the Town Council at the One Voice Wales Innovative Practice Conference at the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth. He has been requested to facilitate a community engagement workshop and deliver a presentation relating to community engagement.

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 also operational meetings with his fellow officers relating to future planning and current projects.

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

Cllr Wheeler detailed his attendance at the below:

- 5th June - Mic Morris Trust meeting.
- 17th & 24th June - Heritage Day Committee meetings.
- 24th June - Armed forces week flag raising ceremony in Pontypool and Blaenavon.

Cllr Porter updated members regarding a Governor's meeting he attended at Blaenavon Heritage V.C school. Members were provided details relating to the school's recent Estyn visit.

It was noted that the pupils writing skills needed improving and that there was not much diversity at the school. The school are planning on twinning with a more diverse school in Newport, which they will visit to address this and experience a more diverse school setting.

Cllr Porter also explained that there is support in place for Year 6 pupils who are transitioning to comprehensive schools, no fines have been issued for absences and two pupils have been excluded.

The school will find it hard to keep to budgets, however they will receive support from Torfaen County Borough Council. Concerns have also been raised over fire procedure health and safety as there is currently no member of staff at the school with the appropriate training to use an Evac chair for a wheelchair user to leave the building in the case of a fire.

Members questioned if there was an area to keep the child safe, which Cllr Porter confirmed there was. Members also discussed the fact that this type of training was easily available, and it was imperative that this issue was resolved as soon as possible.

Cllr Evans updated members on the World Heritage Steering Group meeting he had recently attended. This was held under Chatham House rules, as such, he was unable to discuss further.

Cllr Evans explained he spoke in the meeting about how important it was to capture the increased tourism around the Keeper's Pond area and directing that into the town centre.

Members discussed the unattractive signage as you enter Blaenavon from Keeper's Pond, a key gateway into the town, compared to the more appealing Abergavenny signage and that something needs to be done to improve this and attract more visitors.

Cllr Parfitt made members aware that he conducts regular litter picks in that area as litter is also an issue around the entrance to the town.

Cllr Jones updated members on the coffee morning he attended at the Arthur Jenkins residential home.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

8. To receive an update from Sophie Johnson – Community Wellbeing Development Officer (June 2024)

Sophie provided the following monthly update to members:

Supported Community Capacity Builders and Torfaen's Inspire project with creating bunting and decorations for Heritage Day with various community groups and volunteers. The bunting has now been erected in Broad Street and the other decorations will be completed on the morning of Heritage Day.

Attended the newly launched pop-up gym sessions in partnership with CELT+ Health and Wellbeing team on Friday morning in Forgeside and Friday afternoon in Broad Street car park. These sessions have gained a good following, and attendees are really enjoying them.

Attended the World Heritage Learning and Engagement Steering Group meeting held at Big Pit, with other partners, to discuss the finalised five year action plan and plans for the 25th anniversary of Blaenavon's World Heritage status.

Continue to support World Heritage Day Committee with the organisation of the parade, specifically the school workshops with Llantarnam Grange. The four workshops have now been completed at Ysgol Bryn Onnen and BHVC schools, with children creating head pieces for the parade.

Attended the newly named 'Group GLO' (previously the Intergenerational Group) at Big Pit with children from the Little Voices group at BHVC school, the group brings together the museum's intergenerational and dementia activities groups and celebrates the area's industrial history through art, poetry, and film.

The group is open to all, and takes place alongside [**#MuseumsInspiringMemories**](#), which looks at how museums can impact positively the health and wellbeing of those affected by dementia. Since February, the group have been working on poems and films relating to the town's heritage, which will be shown in an exhibition in the Workmen's Hall on Heritage Day.

Attended meeting with Kat Fox Madley from Torfaen Markets regarding the monthly market in Blaenavon, discussing ways we can support further and ideas for future events and themes.

Planning for summer projects and activities. Confirmed so far are two Cook Stars sessions, two community swimming sessions and four paddleboarding sessions.

Will also be working in partnership with Multiply to deliver two go kart making and racing sessions in Broad Street car park, this is based on the popularity and feedback from families who took part in the taster sessions at the Wellbeing Day held in May.

Also supporting Multiply with the promotion of their family cooking on a budget course taking place in Bethlehem Chapel, from today running for four weeks.

Attended Blaenavon Heritage school celebration assembly to present the D-Day 80 poetry winners with their certificates and prizes. The three winners each received a voucher for an annual magazine subscription of their choice.

Meetings with Wonder Cinema and Blaenavon Ironworks regarding potential outdoor cinema event at Blaenavon Ironworks.

Continue to support the teen gym sessions, yoga, family fit and over sixties exercise groups.

Organised this month's Befriending Film Club, which is taking place on Friday 28th June. The film is One Life.

Attended the Play Sufficiency Network meeting with various partners from across Torfaen, where we discussed summer play provision.

Torfaen Play will be creating a newsletter detailing the events and projects across Torfaen which will be distributed to their service users. Once posters are finalised, I will ensure these are sent and included.

Attended a meeting with Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Chief Officer regarding strategic planning.

Continue to support and signpost residents and partner organisations to the relevant services.

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

Continue to manage and populate the council's Facebook page and reply to residents messages.

Cllr Matthews asked to see a copy of the World Heritage Learning and Engagement Steering Group action plan that Sophie had mentioned, and if there were any projects in which the council would be required to participate.

Sophie explained that the action plan had been sent out by the group to a mailing list which included the Chief Officer and, as far as she could remember, other members. The Chief Officer indicated he had not received this.

Sophie confirmed that she will re send this information to the Chief Officer and members.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

9. To receive, discuss and make a determination relating to quotations received for the Xmas Lights contract 2024-2027.

Members were forwarded quotes from three lighting companies, namely, Festive (current provider), MK Illuminations and Blachere Illuminations prior to the meeting.

The two relevant quotes from Blachere Illuminations were £8170 and £9409.20 over four years.

The quote from Festive was an increase of £900 from 2021, a total of £8304.02 +VAT over three years.

The quote from MK Illuminations was £9,857, however they are unable to supply this year due to lack of stock.

A detailed discussion took place among members covering the following areas:

- The difference in quality and style between the providers.
- The location of the companies.
- Have there been any problems with the current contract holders?
- Would the council be able to change the style of the current lights if continuing with current provider?
- The need for new fixtures at an additional cost if using a new company.

The Chief Officer explained that, when he and Councillor Wheeler met a representative from Blachere lighting, there was little difference between the quality of the lights. Members will also be able to choose the fresh style of lights, from the catalogue previously sent once a contractor has been agreed.

Members suggested choosing a wide range of styles and colours to suit all tastes.

The current provider, Festive is based in Bristol and Blachere Lighting is based in Fife.

The Chief Officer also explained that the current fixings will accommodate new lights from Festive, however, new fixings would need to be fitted by Blachere lighting at an additional cost, if members decide to award the contact to Blachere.

The current providers have been very satisfactory, members discussed if there was a need to change providers if the council already has a good working relationship with them and they provide value for money.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones to continue with the current provider Festive Lighting.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Members agreed to continue the hire of Christmas lights from Festive for 2024-2027. The Chief Officer to contact Festive for details on style of lighting which will be agreed by members in July's finance meeting.

10. To receive, discuss and ratify Blaenavon Town Council's Annual Report 2023/24

The Chief Officer forwarded members a copy of the Annual Report 2023/24 prior to the meeting. Hard copies were also shown to members at the meeting.

The Chief Officer thanked the mayor for his support on producing the document and explained that the 2023/24 year has been a fantastic year for the council.

The document demonstrates the volume of work conducted across a wide range of services that the council delivers based on its capacity and precept.

A brief discussion took place amongst members, which included the amount of work that had gone in to creating the document and that it is an ideal tool to highlight to the public the work conducted by the council.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Templeton to ratify the report.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Members agreed to ratify Blaenavon Town Council's Annual Report 2023/24.

11. To discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to the TCBC Community Review 2024.

The Chief Officer forwarded the TCBC Community Review Document to members prior to the meeting.

It was noted that, because of the pre-election period there has been little progress.

A detailed discussion took place among members covering the following areas:

- Their concerns relating to the ward members being on the working group, and their conflict of interest as previous Blaenavon Town Councillors meaning lack of impartiality.
- The lack of engagement from TCBC regarding the detailed document sent to them by the Chief Officer relating to the Council's concerns about the Community Review working group.
- Has the Chief Officer received a response from Councillor Nathan Yeowell since inviting him to attend a Council meeting for members to raise their concerns and ask questions.

The Chief Officer explained he has received no response to an email sent several weeks ago to Nathan Yeowell and Alan Slade regarding attending a Council meeting to answer members' questions.

Councillor Cowles has also raised the Council's concerns with Nick Thomas - Symmonds and Councillor Anthony Hunt.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllr Cowles to re invite Cllrs Nathan Yeowell and Alan Slade to a council meeting to discuss further, after the pre-election period.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to re invite Cllrs Nathan Yeowell and Chris Slade to the next full council meeting, after the pre-election period, to discuss members concerns.

12. To receive, discuss and make any relevant determinations concerning items relating to the recently update Torfaen Charter.

The Chief Officer forwarded members a copy of the draft Torfaen Charter prior to the meeting and explained to members that they have been asked by Torfaen County Borough Council to ratify the document.

The charter relates to the relationship between Torfaen County Borough Council and Town and Community Councils and their respective responsibilities and roles.

A discussion took place among members which included:

- Concerns over the document being too vague and the points and actions written not being fulfilled.
- The document not correctly reflecting the relationship between Blaenavon Town Council and Torfaen County Borough Council, with many of the points made not currently happening and processes being unclear.
- The layout of the document being confusing and needing improvement.

The Chief Officer expressed his disappointment with the document and stated it lacked evidence of best practice and partnership working, with Blaenavon Town Council's strategic role being ignored.

He also highlighted the lack of engagement regarding the Community Review, as discussed in agenda item 11.

The Chief Officer highlighted a point in the document, which states Torfaen County Borough Council will assist with planning consultation training for Town and Community Councils, however, this is already provided to the Council via Planning Aid Wales, which again shows a lack of understanding.

The Chief Officer went on to highlight further actions within the document that are not currently taking place including:

- Giving Town and Community Councils information about relevant planning committee meetings to attend as observers.
- Sending a list of all scrutiny activities to Town and Community Councils.
- Sharing information on joint projects and encourage scaling up.
- Joint working services to be delivered in most appropriate manner with regards to value for money and added value for local people.
- Ward members and officers to attend community and town meetings as appropriate.
- Will invite town and Community Council to appoint a member to sit on the Standards and Ethics Committee as a representative for the Town and Community Council.
- Will work with Town and Community Councils to raise awareness of local elections and produce publicity to encourage nominations for candidacy.

It was also noted that the document contains the Town Council's incorrect address.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Templeton not to ratify the document.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Members agreed they would not ratify the draft Torfaen Charter in its current form and that it needs to be reviewed further with the points put forward by members.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones to invite at an appropriate time Mr Stephen Vickers, Chief Executive Officer of TCBC to discuss the charter further. This was seconded by Cllr Wheeler.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: The Chief Officer to invite Stephen Vickers, Chief Executive Officer TCBC to a Full Council meeting to discuss the Torfaen Charter.

13. 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.

- Flower Box Project - Cllr Parfitt.
- Planter Project - Cllr Matthews.
- Veteran's Support Hub Project - Cllr Templeton.
- St Fagan's Heritage and Activity Visit Project - Sophie Johnson.
- Stori Craft Group Project - Sophie Johnson.

Flower Box Project:

Cllr Parfitt provided members with details of the proposed project to refurbish the planters on the roundabout at the entrance to the town on the A4043 from Pontypool. Abergavenny Garden Centre will supply the flowers at a cost of £100.

A discussion took place among members.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones to support the project.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Town Council to refurbish the planters with flowers provided by Abergavenny Garden Centre at a cost of £100.

Planter Project:

Cllr Matthews provided members with details of the proposed project to purchase and install street planters. Members had previously been sent quotes for two styles of planters.

A cast iron planter highlighting Blaenavon Town Council logo, at a cost of £1278.00 plus VAT or a galvanised steel planter at a cost of £594.00 plus VAT.

A discussion took place among members including

- Concerns of vandalism.
- The location of the planters.
- The planters being a way to enhance the town's visual appeal and improving biodiversity, engaging volunteers to help with the planting,
- Planning requirements and value for money.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllr Jones to opt for the cast iron planter, further to discussion with and gaining, if relevant, planning permission with Torfaen County Borough Council.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: The Chief Officer to consult with Torfaen County Borough Council to ascertain the need for planning permission for planters. Subject to planning permissions to purchase and install the cast iron planter up to £1500 plus VAT.

Veteran's Support Hub:

Cllr Templeton provided members with the details of the proposed project to work in partnership with Torfaen County Borough Council and CELT+ team to implement a local Veteran's Hub in Blaenavon.

This would be on a monthly basis with the initial meeting taking place on the 15th July 2024 and thereafter the third Monday of each month between 3pm-5pm.

The group's aims would be to support armed forces veterans in Blaenavon and surrounding areas.

The hub would be run from the Constitutional Club. The cost of the project would be £850 per year, which would include venue hire, refreshments, and transport.

A discussion took place among members.

It was proposed by Cllr Porter and seconded by Cllr Cowles to authorise the project on a six month trial basis, with a review after a three month period.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: To work in partnership with TCBC and CELT+ to run a monthly Blaenavon Veteran's Support Hub.

St Fagan's Heritage and Activity Visit:

Sophie provided members with details of the proposed project to organise a visit for members of the community to St Fagan's Museum, which would include the opportunity to take part in a high ropes course in August 2024.

Sophie explained feedback from the community has highlighted the desire to visit various places and try new activities. The project would provide residents the opportunity to discover the history of Wales, instilling a sense of pride in our heritage, whilst also being active and engaged together.

St Fagan's appeals to all ages and is accessible for all, removing any barriers residents may face in taking part in other trips/activities.

The total cost of the project would be £700, with forty-nine residents able to attend and twenty able to take part in the high ropes course.

A brief discussion took place among members.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: St Fagan's Heritage and Activity visit in August 2024 authorised.

Stori Craft Group:

Sophie provided members with an update and details of the proposed project in order to continue to support the Stori craft group at Blaenavon Resource Centre. The positive feedback received from attendees was shared with members.

A brief discussion took place among members.

It was proposed by Cllr Wheeler and seconded by Cllr Porter to continue to support the group with a donation of £300 and to review in six months.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: To continue to support the group with a donation of £300 and to review in six months.

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

- MMCA/24/P/0346/PNT

The above planning application was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

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

- Ambulance Retirement Fellowship.

The fellowship had requested £250 to help fund activities for members.

A discussion took place among members noting the lack of evidence that the fellowship supported any Blaenavon residents.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones to reject the grant application request.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: To reject the Ambulance Retirement Fellowship grant request of £250.

16. To receive, discuss and make any relevant determination concerning items relating to correspondence.

None received.

Meeting ended 19.51

Signed Chairman: W. Matthews

Date: 24/7/24.

