



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26th of MARCH 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, A. Beavan, J. Davies, L. Evans, A. Lewis, J. Hunt.

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

Visitors: Inspector Lee Stachow (Gwent Police)

Members of public: Daniel Morse, Andy Parfitt- Jones.

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

1. To receive any questions from the public.

Daniel Morse requested what steps are the Town Council taking to provide young people with a role in local Government?

Cllr Matthews informed Daniel that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 allows Town and Community Councils to appoint up to two community youth representatives, aged between 15 and 26.

In 2023, Blaenavon Town Council adopted this provision. To progress with the appointment, the Council must issue a public notice of its intention to appoint a community youth representative.

This notice must also be sent to all schools and any further or higher education institutions within the community.

Engaging young people is essential, providing them with a voice in decision-making and ensuring their views are heard.

Daniel thanked Cllr Matthews for the Council's response.

Resolved: Members noted the question and response.

2. To receive and accept apologies.

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

- Cllr Parfitt
- 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 Davies – Personal – item 23
- Cllr Hunt – Personal – item 11
- Cllr Evans – Personal – item 23

4. To receive a policing update from Inspector Lee Stachow (Geographical Inspector for Torfaen)

Inspector Stachow provided an overview of crime statistics for Blaenavon over the past three months. Sundays remain the busiest day for policing, but overall, there are no significant issues in the area, which is a positive outcome.

The dedicated, government-funded Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team continues to free up Gwent Police resources.

ASB-related incidents have decreased, with only 17 referrals since Christmas and two injunctions issued. These measures have been highly effective, with no further issues reported from the individuals involved.

Overall, ASB levels in Blaenavon remain low. Hopefully, ASB patrols will be extended throughout the year if funding allows.

The off - road bike partnership, led by PC Dani Lundrigan in a full-time capacity and supported by Gwent Police, is ongoing. The team is preparing for Easter and the upcoming Bank Holidays, as these periods typically see increased activity.

Routine warrants have also been executed in Blaenavon, including those related to drugs and banned dogs.

Cllr Hunt raised concerns about the policy at the Resource Centre regarding unaccompanied minors.

Insp Stachow noted that since the restrictions were implemented, incidents of anti-social behaviour have improved.

Cllr Beavan inquired about additional funding for recruitment. Insp Stachow was unsure of the current funding position but confirmed that management had approved a replacement for PC Lundrigan and that minimum staffing levels would always be maintained.

Cllr Evans asked about the best way to report heritage crime. Insp Stachow advised that if the issue was urgent, 999 should be used. For non-urgent concerns, reports could be made via 101 or social media. He assured that all reported crimes would be assessed, prioritised, and responded to accordingly.

Members thanked Insp Stachow for his input. Insp Stachow then left the meeting.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

5. To receive a TCBC update from Ward Councillors.

The Chief Officer advised members that he invited borough Cllrs Jones and Horler via email on 19th of March 2025 to attend the Town Council Full Council meeting. However, no response has been received.

Cllr Cowles provided the following update:

At the TCBC Full Council meeting held on 4th March 2025, the budget for the 2025/26 financial year was approved by a majority vote. The budget includes a 4.95% increase, one of the lowest in Wales.

Following the by-election on 13th February 2025 for Trevethin and Penygarn, Stewart Keyte was elected as a representative for Reform UK.

As a result of changes in political group numbers, Cllr Janet Jones will no longer chair the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This position will now be held by Cllr Alan Slade.

Recent works at the Flower Park have been completed, including:

- Installation of a picnic bench.
- Construction of an access ramp.
- Resurfacing of internal roads and pathways.

Additionally, the tennis courts will be opening to the public in the coming weeks. The courts are fully prepared and are only awaiting the installation of QR codes to enable online booking.

Cllr Cowles, a TCBC representative on the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Committee, was unable to attend a recent site visit to Foxhunter Car park, Keeper's Pond, and Blaenavon World Heritage Centre. However, feedback from attendees was positive.

BBNP plan to introduce an optional parking donation scheme at Foxhunter Car park and Keeper's Pond starting April 1st, 2025.

Cllr Hunt praised TCBC's work at the Flower Park. He raised concerns about the impact of the proposed parking donations by BBNP on the local community. He was reassured that payments would not be mandatory and that funds would go toward BBNP maintenance.

Members also discussed dog fouling and the need for a bin at Keeper's Car park. Cllr Cowles will investigate whether Monmouthshire County Borough Council or BBNP is responsible for this.

Since the last meeting, Cllr Cowles has continued to report issues to TCBC as they are brought to his attention by the public. If any members have concerns or receive reports of TCBC related issues, they are encouraged to contact Cllr Cowles.

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.

- 4th of March – Attended a meeting with The Media Agency to discuss the new website.
- 7th of March – Attended a presentation evening at The Parkway Hotel.
- 9th of March – Attended the Town Council Covid 19 Day of Reflection tree planting and service at the Flower Park.
- 13th of March – Attended the VE Day 80 working group meeting.
- 17th of March – Attended the World Heritage site Board meeting.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

7. Council Meetings: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 26th of February 2025.

Minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Minutes accepted 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 16 within the minutes, on the 27th of February 2025 instructed The Media Agency to commence works on the new Town Council website.

Item 17 within the minutes, in relation to consolidation order 2019, the Chief Officer has forwarded the determinations made by Town Cllrs to TCBC Highways department which has been logged.

On the 9th of March 2025, attended the Town Council Covid 19 Day of Reflection tree planting and service at the Flower Park.

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.

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

Cllr Matthews attended the World Heritage Site Partnership Board meeting on the 17th March 2025 where key issues were discussed, including the long-term sick leave of the coordinator and the potential need for a deputy with partners considering joint contributions.

Further discussions included the Steering Group and Working Group, which has not met in several years along with the need for a chair for the Exploring and Enjoying Blaenavon Industrial Landscape group, which will be addressed in item 11 within the agenda.

Ashleigh Taylor provided an update on funding for the World Heritage 25th Anniversary, noting that the National Lottery grant application is yet to be submitted. The risk register was noted.

Other concerns included the RWE Abertillery wind farm, Blaenavon House, and restrictions on the Monmouth and Brecon Canal.

Members noted that the World Heritage Site plan remains up to date.

During the grant application process, Cllr Evans suggested to Ashleigh Taylor the idea of providing disabled access from the Foxhunter Car park to the trig point on the Bloreng Mountain.

While the proposal was deemed too costly at this time, it may be considered in the future. If implemented, it would make this the only trig point with accessible access.

Cllr Wheeler provided updates on recent meetings attended:

On the 5th March 2025, attended the Mic Morris Trustee meeting, where £2,000 was distributed to young athletes, including £400 to a kickboxer from Forgeside.

On the 10th March 2025, participated in the World Heritage Day hybrid meeting. The chair suggested that the agreed £5,000 be managed directly by the Town Council rather than donated to the WHD team, potentially to cover road closures and/or fund a small event.

On the 13th March 2025, attended the VE Day 80 working group meeting, updates to follow.

Cllr Hunt informed members that on the 24th of March 2025, he attended the Torfaen Museum Trust to work alongside officers to conduct an audit of the museum site access.

Resolved: Members noted the updates.

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

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

Sophie provided the following overview:

Befriending Film Club

Film club continues to be well attended and will be taking place on Friday 28th March. Age Connects will be in attendance to provide advice and support on various topics including cost of living.

Mums & Daughters Fitness Sessions

The sessions are running well and will continue to run for a further six months, in 50/50 partnership with Torfaen Sports Development.

Community Kit Room project with Sports Development

Many donations had made although uptake had been poor. This had been reflected across the borough.

Community Swimming Session – February 2025

Attendance was slightly lower for this session due to a change of day caused by pool availability. The session on April 25th will return to its usual Friday morning, allowing for greater participation.

Cook Stars Session – February 2025

The session was fully booked with 14 children and their families taking part. The next session is planned for April 15th at Bethlehem Chapel.

Arthur Jenkins Community Choir

With occupancy increasing, these sessions have now restarted, taking place every Tuesday 2pm-3pm. Members are welcome to attend.

Veterans' Support Hub

Due to low numbers and the resignation of Cllr Templeton (project lead) these sessions have been postponed until further notice.

Fashion Show

Tickets have sold out for the show, which is due to take place on Tuesday 6th May at the World Heritage Centre.

Outdoor Cinema – Blaenavon Heritage Railway 29th & 30th July 2025

A 'save the date' post has been circulated online by Wonder Cinema and the Heritage Railway. Tickets will launch on April the 4th 2025 for a two-week exclusive period for Blaenavon residents only, followed by general sale.

VE Day 80 Events

A garden party celebration for the community is planned for Saturday 3rd May 12-4pm at the Arthur Jenkins Residential Home.

Also, a service is planned for 8th May at St Peters Church at 6.30 - 7pm.

BHVC and Ysgol Brynn Onnen schools have been invited to take part in a poetry competition to further mark the occasion.

Craft Group

It has been confirmed the group can continue using the Resource Centre for their weekly sessions. Craft supplies have been purchased and will be gifted to the group by the Town Council on Monday 31st March at 1pm. Available Cllrs are invited to attend for the presentation and photographs.

During the Covid 19 Day of Reflection tree planting and Service Sue Driscoll expressed an interest that Bethlehem Chapel would be pleased to collaborate with the council on the VE Day 80 Service at St Peters Church.

Sophie had held talks with Torfaen Voluntary Alliance (TVA) regarding the planning for the upcoming community transport pilot project. Updates will follow as this progresses.

Cllr Matthews added that he had emailed the Workmen's Hall and Cllr Janet Jones in relation to any other community events being held for VE Day 80.

On the 10th of May the Workmen's Hall is hosting a 1940's themed ball. Cllr Matthews requested that all community D Day 80 events are promoted by the Town Council.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

11. To discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to the chairing of the exploring and enjoying the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape Working Group.

The terms of reference had been sent to all members ahead of the meeting.

Blaenavon Industrial Heritage Landscape working group, which focuses on tourism and visitor opportunities.

With TCBC no longer chairing, and given the Town Council's active role in tourism, Cllr Matthews suggested that the Council could consider chairing the group and he would take this back to members for a determination at the March 2025 Full Council meeting.

The board expressed support for the Town Council should they take on the role.

Members had a brief discussion.

Cllr Matthews proposed that Blaenavon Town Council accept the offer to chair the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape Group. This was seconded by Cllr Cowles.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Blaenavon Town Council to accept the offer to chair the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape Group.

12. 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.

Cllr Davies offered to be the appointed representative for the Town Council.

This was proposed by Cllr Hunt and seconded by Cllr Wheeler.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Cllr Davies appointed as minor authority school governor to Ysgol Bryn Onnen.

13. 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 Templeton was an appointed signatory for the Town Council bank account.

Cllr Lewis volunteered to be the appointed fourth signatory.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllr Beavan that Cllr Lewis be the fourth signatory.

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All members in agreement.

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

14. To receive, discuss and note the Local Government and Housing Committee (Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament) report on the role, governance and accountability of the Community and Town Council Sector.

The report was forwarded to all members prior to the meeting.

Cllr Matthews provided members with an overview.

A discussion took place amongst members.

Resolved: Members noted the report.

15. To discuss and make a determinations relating to the publication of costs incurred by Blaenavon Councillors (Cllr Evans).

Cllr Evans informed members that residents were confused about the difference between Blaenavon TCBC Cllr salaries and Blaenavon Town Cllrs allowances.

While this information is available online, it is not easily accessible.

It was suggested that a letter be sent to Blaenavon TCBC Cllrs requesting details of their salaries for this election cycle. This information, along with Blaenavon Town Cllrs allowances, could then be published on the Blaenavon Town Council website to improve transparency.

The IRPW report for 2025/26 outlines the allowances for Town and Community Cllrs and the salaries for Borough Cllrs.

TCBC Cllrs for Blaenavon salaries have increased by 6% to £19,771, with an 18% total increase since May 2022. Additional payments for committee roles can raise salaries to £30,000.

In contrast, the total annual allowances for **twelve** Blaenavon Town Cllrs amount to **£4,496**, while the combined salaries of **three** TCBC Blaenavon Cllrs with on costs are close to **£100,000**.

Members agreed that misconceptions about Town Cllr allowances should be addressed to ensure residents have a clear understanding.

Cllr Evans proposed requesting the three TCBC Cllrs salaries and publishing them on Blaenavon Town Council website along with the Town Cllr allowances.

This was seconded by Cllr Wheeler.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Blaenavon TCBC Cllr salaries and Blaenavon Town Cllr allowances to be published on Blaenavon Town Council website.

A further discussion took place amongst members.

Cllr Evans proposed that all three Blaenavon TCBC Cllrs be formally requested to provide details of their salaries.

This was seconded by Cllr Wheeler.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to write to all three TCBC Cllrs for Blaenavon and request their salary information.

16. To discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to twinning opportunities 2025.

Lord German was approached by the Slovenian Ambassador (Sonja Stiglic) regarding forming a relationship with Blaenavon and Hrastrnik.

An initial visit with Lord German, the Ambassador and members of Hrastrnik Town Council is proposed for May 9th, 2025.

Blaenavon Town Council will be the lead on this visit which will take place between 11am and 3pm. The visit will start with meet and greet at the Heritage Centre, followed by visits to the Ironworks, Heritage Railway and Big Pit.

Cadw, Big Pit and the Heritage Railway have all been contacted and informed of the visit and Lord German has been advised of the itinerary for the day.

The railway offered to provide a Welsh engine to transport guests between the railway and Big Pit. A minibus has been booked to transport guests and Cllrs from venue to venue, finalising at the Lion Hotel for a buffet lunch.

The Chief Officer has invited Nick Thomas Symonds MP, Cllr Joanne Gauden TCBC, who is unable to attend and will extend an invite to Cllr Anthony Hunt, leader of TCBC.

Further updates will follow as planning progresses.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

17. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding the nomination of a local charity to receive the monies generated from raffle ticket sales at the Town Councils fashion show event on the 6th of May 2025.

A discussion took place amongst members who considered local charities to receive proceeds from the fashion show raffle ticket sales. Cllr Matthews suggested Hwb Torfaen.

Cllr Hunt proposed Hwb Torfaen as the beneficiary charity. This was seconded by Cllr Evans.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Hwb Torfaen to receive proceeds from the fashion show raffle ticket sales.

18. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding the One Voice Wales National Awards Conference 2025.

The One Voice Wales National Awards Conference will be held on 30th of April 2025 at the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth.

Five innovative practice applications have been submitted by the Council for assessment by the appointed judging panels.

Cllrs to contact the Chief Officer if they would like to attend.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

19. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding membership of One Voice Wales for 2025/26.

The Chief Officer presented to members the One Voice Wales membership fees of £1286 for 2025/26.

A brief discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Matthews to renew the membership with One Voice Wales for 2025/26.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to renew membership with One Voice Wales for 2025/26.

20. To discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to the impact of fires located on Blaenavon mountain and the potential risk to the community in general. (Cllr Hunt)

Cllr Hunt suggested deferring the update to a future meeting due to time constraints but provided a brief overview of key concerns, including risks to residents, insufficient evacuation accommodation, and the lack of a register for vulnerable residents.

Members discussed the feasibility of maintaining such a register, landscape barriers, and the potential role of Blaenavon Town Council in emergency situations.

Cllr Matthews proposed inviting the Civil Contingency Officer to a future meeting to explore possible solutions. This was seconded by Cllr Beavan.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Civil Contingency Officer to be invited to a future Town Council meeting.

21. 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.

22. 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:** Installation of 2 x heat source pumps
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit, Blaenavon

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Variation to planning application. Amendment to tank works
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit, Blaenavon

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Single storey extension
- **LOCATION:** 4 Clapham Terrace, Forgeside, Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

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

The Chief Officer forwarded two donation requests to members prior to the meeting for their perusal.

Members discussed the donation requests, namely:

- **Ioan James – Sound Therapy Equipment**

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the availability of sound therapy via the NHS for free and currently, Ioan James does not have an existing business to offer services to the community.

It was proposed by Cllr Wheeler not to support the request. This was seconded by Cllr Cowles.

All members in agreement.

Resolved – Application rejected.

- **Blaenavon Blues AFC** - providing 420 children with a medal for their participation in the Blaenavon Blues Second Annual Football Festival.

It was proposed by Cllr Beavan to support the request with a £250 donation. This was seconded by Cllr Evans.

All members in agreement.

Resolved - Application authorised

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

The Chief Officer forwarded the email to all members prior to the meeting.

- **Email from Brian Lewis site manager at Big Pit**

The Town Council previously sponsored two apprenticeships at Big Pit, totalling £6,000 over three years.

Brian Lewis has now requested that the Council consider continuing sponsorship for the next three years at a cost of £2,500 per year.

Members discussed the sponsorship criteria, whether apprentices remain at Big Pit after completing their apprenticeships, and the reasoning behind the 25% increase in the funding request.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews to invite Brian Lewis to a future meeting to discuss further. This was seconded by Cllr Beavan.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Brian Lewis to be invited to a future Town Council meeting.

The Chief Officer forwarded three letters, two from the Blaenavon Branch of the Royal British Legion and one response from the Town Council to all members prior to the meeting.

- **Letter from Blaenavon Branch RBL**

Members reviewed the letters received and the concerns raised by the RBL. A lengthy discussion took place amongst members

Cllr Matthews proposed that Blaenavon Town Council does not follow the national RBL guidance on order of precedence and yield to march behind the Blaenavon Branch of the RBL at the 2025 Remembrance Day Parade.

This was seconded by Cllr Hunt.

Cllr Wheeler abstained from voting

Resolved: Blaenavon Town Council does not follow the national RBL guidance on order of precedence and yield to march behind the Blaenavon Branch of the RBL at the 2025 Remembrance Day Parade.

Meeting ended at 20.15 hrs

Signed Chairman: *W. Matthew*

Date: 23/4/25.

