



**BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL FINANCE MEETING**  
**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> of APRIL 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 in attendance:** M. Wheeler, (In the Chair), N. Matthews, L. Evans, J. Hunt, J. Davies, L. Cowles.

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

**Visitors:** Brian Lewis. (Head of Site – Mine Manager, Big Pit National Coal Museum).

**Members of public:** None present

The finance meeting was opened at 6:30pm by the Deputy Mayor Councillor Wheeler 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 Porter
- Cllr Beavan
- Cllr Parfitt
- Cllr Lewis

It was proposed by Cllr Hunt and seconded by Cllr Evans that the apologies be accepted.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved** - Apologies accepted.

### **3. Declarations of Interest.**

None declared.

### **4. To receive an update from Mr Brian Lewis (Head of Site – Mine Manager, Big Pit National Coal Museum) regarding Big Pit Apprenticeship sponsorship.**

Mr Lewis presented an overview of the apprenticeship scheme at Big Pit, highlighting how the sponsorship funds from Blaenavon Town Council have been used previously.

Currently, three apprentices are employed by Big Pit through sponsorship provided by Blaenavon Town Council over the past three years, with their placements set to conclude this year.

The sponsorship has been instrumental in supporting training and development activities. It has funded specialist courses, covered travel expenses for college attendance at Gower College in Swansea and provided financial support for a mining trainee's studies at the Camborne School of Mines in Exeter.

In addition, Mr Lewis outlined a comprehensive five-year succession plan in anticipation of upcoming retirements. The plan includes a range of apprenticeship and trainee roles, such as trainee fitters, surface guides, an electrical apprentice, and a future Mine Manager.

Mr Lewis requested if the Town Council would continue its sponsorship for a further three years. He emphasised that the funding goes a long way in supporting the apprentices and plays a vital role in maintaining opportunities for young people at Big Pit.

Members raised several questions during the discussion:

#### What is the retention rate of apprentices?

Mr Lewis acknowledged that retention remains an ongoing challenge. To help address this, efforts are made to recruit individuals with personal or family connections/association to the mine.

#### Does the bulk of the sponsorship funding go towards training?

Mr Lewis explained that a significant portion of the funding is allocated to training-related expenses, including travel to college, participation in field trips, and health and safety training. Overall, most of the expenditure is focused on training and development.

#### Are the National Coal Museum Wales aware of the retention issues, and can they provide support?

Mr Lewis confirmed that discussions are underway with union representatives to improve the current hourly and overtime pay rates, which are not competitive with other industries. A decision on these matters is anticipated by June 2025.

#### What percentage of apprentices are from Blaenavon?

All three current apprentices are residents of Blaenavon.

Members thanked Mr Lewis for his attendance and providing a detailed update for them to consider.

Mr Lewis then left the meeting.

**Resolved** – Members noted update.

**5. Council Meetings: To confirm the minutes of the Council Finance Meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2025.**

Minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

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

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Minutes approved as a true and accurate record.

**6. Responsible Finance Officer's Update: To receive and consider the March 2025 financial updates.**

Mr Warren (Responsible Finance Officer) forwarded to members the March 2025 financial reports electronically in advance of the meeting which detailed the following areas:

- Income and Expenditure
- Credit Card Payments
- Cheque Payments
- Bacs Payments
- Cash Book Transactions
- Bank Reconciliation
- Project Expenditure
- Budget
- VAT
- Bank Statements (Statement No 179)
- Petty Cash

Mr Warren presented to members each of the above areas of finance for March 2025 and highlighted any relevant information.

This marks the end of the 2024/25 financial year. Commencing from April 2025, as a result of the precept exceeding £200,000, the new finance system will be recorded on an Income and Expenditure basis.

Members were invited to ask any questions in relation to the information presented.

Members were happy with the presentation.

It was proposed by Cllr Hunt and seconded by Cllr Evans that the financial report for March 2025 be accepted.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Financial update for March 2025 accepted by members.

**7. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding the Town Council's VE Day events taking place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2025.**

The CWD Officer presented members with an overview of the plans for the VE Day 80 event, scheduled for May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025, in partnership with Arthur Jenkins Care Home.

The presentation included confirmed attractions, school participation, a breakdown of costs, and potential income from stallholders on the day.

The Chief Officer provided an update on the service at St Peter's Church, taking place on May 8th, 2025. This included details about attendees, invited guests, promotional posters, and booklets, as well as estimated costs.

Additionally, the proclamation, to be read by the mayor, and the flag-raising ceremony will take place on May 8<sup>th</sup> at 9am at the Cenotaph.

Cllr Wheeler proposed increasing the budget to £2,800, which was seconded by Cllr Hunt.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** VE Day 80 budget of £2800 agreed.

**8. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding the Town Council's Twinning Event taking place on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2025.**

The Chief Officer provided members with an update on the planned visit by delegates from Slovenia and shared email correspondence from the Slovenian Ambassador's office and Lord German.

Both have confirmed their attendance and requested a formal invite be forwarded to Hrastnik Council.

The Chief Officer's update also alluded to the itinerary for the day, gift hamper, commemorative plaque, lunch arrangements, and photography arrangements.

A detailed discussion took place among members regarding costs, with clarification that no travel or accommodation expenses would be incurred by the council for the visiting guests from Slovenia.

Cllr Wheeler proposed a budget of £700 for the visit. This was seconded by Cllr Matthews.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Civic Visit budget of £700 agreed.

A further discussion took place regarding invited guests.

The Chief Officer confirmed that Cllr Joanne Gauden ( TCBC Cabinet Member) had been invited, unfortunately she is unavailable on the day and requested that Cllr Janet Jones attend in her absence in her capacity as World Heritage Champion.

Cllr Cowles offered members a potential guest list with a brief discussion taking place amongst members. This was seconded by Cllr Evans.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Civic event guest invites agreed.

**9. To receive, discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to the cost of a road closure order for World Heritage Day 2025.**

The Council had previously agreed within the budget the allocation of £5,000 to support World Heritage Day 2025. The WHD group suggested that rather than transferring funds to them, the Town Council could pay for the road closures directly to the supplier.

The cost of road closures in 2024 was £2,397. Ashleigh Taylor is currently confirming the costs for this year's event. The next WHD group meeting is scheduled for April 14th.

An update will be available in due course.

Members inquired about Torfaen's contribution to WHD 2025. Cllr Wheeler confirmed that Torfaen would be donating £10,000 to WHD 2025.

Cllr Wheeler proposed that the Town Council cover the road closure costs for WHD 2025, with a maximum limit of £2,500. This was seconded by Cllr Hunt.

Cllr Evans proposed an amendment to the proposal, suggesting that the Town Council pay for the road closures **in the region of** £2,500 as the cost could exceed by a small amount.

This was seconded by Cllr Cowles.

All members in agreement.

The amendment stands.

**Resolved:** Town Council to pay road closures fees for World Heritage Day 2025 in the region of £2,500.

**10. To receive, discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to the casual vacancy for a Town Councillor with Blaenavon East ward.**

The notice for the East Ward vacancy closed on 3rd April 2025, with confirmation that no letters of interest were received. As a result, the process will now proceed to co-option.

There is also a vacancy in the West Ward, which will be finalised on 15th April 2025. It is not yet confirmed whether this will proceed via election or co-option.

Should both vacancies proceed to co-option, the process may be aligned and advertised jointly on 24th April 2025 and presented at the May 2025 Full Council meeting.

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

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** If both vacancies follow the co-option process, they will be aligned and jointly advertised.

**11. To discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to the Town Council Training Plan 2022/27**

To comply with legal requirements, a five-year training plan was implemented in 2022. This will be reviewed in June 2025, following the completion of the co-option process.

Cllr attendance at training sessions during 2024–2025 was notably low.

It is important that Cllrs regularly refresh their training, as it supports informed decision-making and strengthens overall governance. Audit Wales could review the training plan as part of the Council's audit requirements for 2025.

Following a brief discussion, Cllr Cowles proposed that agenda item 11 be deferred until the June 2025 Full Council Meeting, following the co-option process.

This was seconded by Cllr Hunt.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Agenda item eleven deferred to June 2025 Full Council meeting.

**12. To receive an update regarding the Audit Wales, Audit of Accounts 2025 requirements relating to the 2024/25 fiscal period.**

The Chief Officer presented members with an overview of the timetables, fees, and legal requirements outlined by Audit Wales for 2025 which were displayed on screen.

The process involves a considerable amount of work for the Responsible Financial Officer and is both detailed and demanding.

The Chief Officer will continue to keep members updated throughout the audit process.

**Resolved** – Members noted the update.

**13. To discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to the Town Council's litter picking arrangements for April 2025.**

The litter picking session scheduled for April 20<sup>th</sup> falls on Easter Sunday. Members discussed the possibility of rescheduling the session.

It was proposed by Cllr Wheeler and seconded by Cllr Hunt to cancel the litter pick session for April 2025.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** April 2025 litter pick session to be rearranged.

The Assistant Chief Officer updated members on dog fouling deterrent packs offered to Blaenavon Heritage Pickers group from Ollie James, the litter and fly tipping prevention officer at Torfaen.

After some consideration, members decided not to accept the offer of the packs at this time.

It was felt that as a result of many litter picks, dog fouling hasn't been highlighted as a significant issue. In addition, as the same locations aren't routinely revisited, it would be difficult to monitor the effectiveness of the packs.

It was proposed by Cllr Wheeler and seconded by Cllr Evans to decline the packs at this time.

All members in agreement.

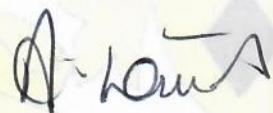
**Resolved:** Assistant Chief Officer to update Ollie James.

**14. 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.

Meeting ended at 20.002 hrs

Chairman Signed:



Date: 14/5/25

# Financial Summary - Cashbook

Summary of receipts and payments between 01/04/25 and 30/04/25 inclusive. This may include transactions with ledger dates outside this period.

Balances at the start of the year

## Ordinary Accounts

Current Account		£82,365.83
Petty Cash		£4.73
Total		£82,370.56

RECEIPTS	Net	Vat	Gross
Council	£68,570.85	£0.00	£68,570.85
Total Receipts	£68,570.85	£0.00	£68,570.85
PAYMENTS	Net	Vat	Gross
Council	£22,878.19	£735.43	£23,613.62
Total Payments	£22,878.19	£735.43	£23,613.62

Closing Balances

## Ordinary Accounts

Current Account	£127,323.06
Petty Cash	£4.73
Total	£127,327.79

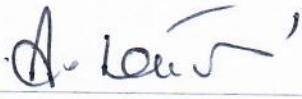
Uncleared and Unpresented effects

Statement Closing Balances

## Ordinary Accounts

Current Account	£127,323.06
Petty Cash	£4.73
Total	£127,327.79

Signed

  
A. Lawrence  
14/5/25

Chair

  
A. Lawrence  
Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer