



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 28th May 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. L. Evans (In the Chair) L. Cowles, M. Wheeler, A. Beavan, J. Davies, A. Lewis, J. Hunt, T. Griffin, I. Parfitt.

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

Visitors: Sylvia Maslen – Co-option Candidate, J. Jones & N. Horler (TCBC Cllrs)

Members of public: None.

The Full Council meeting was opened at 6:30pm by Mayor Cllr Lewis Evans 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 Matthews

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved - Apologies accepted.

3. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Lewis – Personal – item 20
- Cllr Hunt – Personal – item 16 and 22

4. To receive a TCBC update from Ward Councillors.

Cllr Janet Jones provided the following update:

Cllr Jones thanked the Town Council for the kind invitation to attend the recent visit of the Slovenian Ambassador and wished the Council continued success with its future engagements.

She confirmed that, following the recent TCBC Annual Meeting, she remains a member of the same committees as previously.

Cllr Jones raised ongoing concerns regarding issues at Keepers Pond, including fire risks from barbeques, littering, dog fouling, and environmental damage.

She has met with representatives from Brecon Beacons National Park, Gwent Police, and the Fire Service, who regularly monitor the site. Additionally, Cllr Jones met with Peter Fox AM to request the installation of a defibrillator.

While concerns were raised about the need for an electricity supply, it is understood the equipment may be battery operated. A further update is awaited.

Cllr Jones has submitted an urgent request for a meeting with the Steering Committee to address these issues, and should this not lead to a satisfactory resolution, she intends to request a board meeting.

Cllr Jones also raised concerns over the Heritage Centre's planned closure on Bank Holidays, expressing disappointment over the impact this could have on tourism.

She questioned whether this decision stems from cost-cutting or potential staff redundancies and has arranged a meeting with David Leech and the TCBC Chief Executive to discuss the matter further.

She highlighted that fly-tipping remains a significant problem across Blaenavon, much of it on private land.

To highlight the issue, Cllr Jones brought a cabinet member to visit the affected areas. She has submitted a question to Full Council, asking whether Welsh Government policy needs to change, and will raise the matter with the Steering Committee.

Finally, Cllr Jones shared that Cllr Jane Watkins has been appointed as the new Torfaen Champion for Violence Against Women and Girls and looks forward to working alongside her to strengthen support for victims.

Cllr Nick Horler provided the following update:

Cllr Horler informed members that the individual previously staying in a tent at Keepers Pond has now left the area. He had contacted both Torfaen and Monmouthshire Councils regarding the matter as a homeless concern.

He also raised ongoing issues in Curwood with Bron Afon Housing officers and confirmed that a meeting with TCBC is scheduled for Thursday, 29th May to discuss the situation further.

Cllr Horler reported positive developments regarding Ty Mawr. He has been in regular contact with the owner, and new discussions have taken place about potential projects for the site. A recent meeting with the owner and a TCBC planning officer was described as positive.

He thanked Cllr Evans for highlighting the issue of new wire fencing and a trip hazard at Garn Lakes. Both Cllrs had reported the issue, and the trip hazard has now been removed.

Cllr Horler has requested a visit from senior officers to Garn Lakes to discuss ongoing concerns.

Cllr Cowles provided the following update:

Cllr Cowles attended the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7th May, where pupil attendance and exclusions were discussed. While attendance across primary and secondary schools continues to improve, it remains below pre-pandemic levels.

Exclusion rates remain high and are still rising. The Inclusion Service is closely monitoring this and supporting schools, while also developing additional services.

TCBC has updated its Pupil Referral Unit protocol, enabling more pupils to access specialist support.

At the TCBC Annual Meeting, Cllr Cowles was reappointed to the Education Scrutiny Committee, Licensing Committee, and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA).

He has also submitted an expression of interest to continue as Deputy Chair of the BBNPA Audit and Risk Committee.

Cllr Cowles has been contacted by several residents regarding fly-tipping in Blaenavon and continues to report these and other issues to TCBC. He encouraged members to pass on any TCBC-related concerns to him directly.

He also confirmed that works to install dropped kerbs in Blaenavon have been completed.

An update was given on the online booking system for Blaenavon tennis courts. Enquiries have been made about storing equipment at the school to make access easier for users.

Members raised further points:

- Cllr Evans advised submitting complex queries to the Borough Councillor in writing due to meeting time limits.

- Members asked whether fly-tipping is being conducted by professional tradespeople. Cllr Jones confirmed this is suspected and investigations, including use of cameras, are ongoing.
- Questions were raised about the uptake of tennis court bookings. Cllr Jones will follow up with the library.
- Clarification was given by Cllr Horler that entry codes for the tennis courts are changed with each booking.
- Cllr Evans agreed to submit a detailed question in writing for a formal response.

Resolved: Members noted the updates.

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

Members received co-option presentation from Mrs Sylvia Maslen.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Maslen for her presentation.

Mrs Maslen then left the meeting

Resolved: Members noted the presentation.

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

Members discussed the presentation and agreed that Sylvia Maslen had demonstrated skills that could benefit the role of town councillor.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Beavan to ratify the appointment of Sylvia Maslen as a Blaenavon Town Councillor.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Sylvia Maslen appointed as a Blaenavon Town Councillor.

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

As the Mayor has only recently been elected, there were no announcements.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

8. Council Meetings: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 23rd of April 2025.

Minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

It was proposed by Cllr Lewis 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 10 within the minutes as per the instructions from members, the Chief Officer informed Brian Lewis, Mine Manager at Big Pit mining museum regarding the Council's determination to approve the annual £2,500 apprentice sponsorship for three years.

Item 13 within the minutes as per the instructions from members. On the 24th of April 2025, the Chief Officer advertised the position of Community Youth representative for Blaenavon Town Council.

The closing date was the 12th of May 2025. It was confirmed that four applications have been received.

Item 16 within the minutes as per the instructions from members, the Chief Officer contacted OVW and conducted further enquiries regarding the appointment of a Mayor's / Town Council chaplain.

This will be discussed further at item 17 within the agenda.

Item 20 within the minutes as per the instructions from members. The Chief Officer updated Kat Fox – Madely regarding the Council's decision not to support a financial request for Torfaen Pride Events due to the Council's current budget constraints.

No response has been received.

On the 15/4/25, an email was received from Emrys John at OVW informing the Council that they have been shortlisted for four Innovative Practice awards at the National Awards Conference being held on the 30/4/25 at Builth Wells.

As members are aware, five project applications were submitted for assessment and these were assessed by a judging panel consisting of the Welsh Government, WLGA and a cohort of key third sector organisations from across Wales.

The Chief Officer explained that the Town Council were shortlisted in the following categories.

- Best Governance Initiative.
- Best Democratic Health Initiative.
- Best Community Engagement Initiative
- Best Older Person's Initiative

Subsequently, the Council were invited to deliver presentations relating to three of their projects at the National Conference. These were

- Best Governance Initiative.
- Best Democratic Health Initiative.
- Best Community Engagement Initiative

Again, this provided the Town Council with an opportunity to share their projects across Wales and receive the recognition which is well deserved.

On the 30th of April 2025, together with the Assistant Chief Officer, Community Wellbeing Officer, Cllrs Matthews, Davies and Wheeler, the Chief Officer attended the OVW National Innovative Practice Awards conference at Builth Wells and delivered three project presentations.

The Town Council were successful and received the following National Innovative Practice Awards

- Best Governance Initiative.
- Best Community Engagement Initiative.
- Highly Commended – Older Persons Initiative.
- Highly Commended – Best Democratic Health Initiative.

As further recognition based on the initiatives delivered to Blaenavon residents, the Council have been invited to represent the sector together with Criccieth Town Council at the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) National Conference at Llandudno on the 18th of June 2025.

This will be discussed further at item 19 within the agenda.

On the 3rd of May 2025 together with fellow officers and Cllrs, the Chief Officer attended the VE Day 80 garden party at the Arthur Jenkins Residential Home.

On the 8th of May 2025 together with fellow officers and Cllrs, the Chief officer attended the VE Day 80 flag raising ceremony and reading of the VE day proclamation at Blaenavon cenotaph.

Also, on the 8th of May 2025 together with fellow officers and Cllrs, the Chief Officer attended the VE Day 80 service of peace held at St Peter's Church.

On the 9th of May 2025 together with fellow officers and Cllrs, the Chief Officer attended the Civic Visit of the Slovenian Ambassador to Blaenavon.

Also, since the last meeting the Chief Officer has held weekly briefing sessions with the former Mayor, current Mayor and deputy mayor discussing Council operational and financial matters together with operational meetings with 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 Hunt attended Torfaen Museum Trust and assisted with the accessibility audit.

Cllr Davies attended her first school governors meeting held at Ysgol Bryn Onnen, she also attended the VE Day Garden party celebrations at Arthur Jenkins care home. Further, she has completed numerous One Voice Wales online Cllr training sessions.

Cllr Griffin attended One Voice Wales Cllr online training.

Resolved: Members noted the updates.

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

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

Any questions should be addressed to Sophie, who is currently on annual leave.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

12. To receive and approve the Town Council's Annual Return and Financial Governance Statement for 2024/25.

The Town Council's annual return and governance statement for 2024/25 had been forwarded to members prior to the meeting.

Members discussed questions 1-10 of the annual governance statement within the annual return and provided relevant responses for submission to Audit Wales.

The remainder of the document was viewed by members who were happy with the content. The annual return 2024/25 was signed by the mayor on behalf of the Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Beavan and seconded by Cllr Griffin that the annual return and financial governance statement for 2024/25 be approved.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Annual return and financial governance statement for 2024/25 approved for submission to Audit Wales.

13. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding the Town Council's fashion show event held on the 6th of May 2025

Cllr Lewis provided members with the following update on the event.

The show was very well attended, with all tickets sold out in advance. Feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing interest in a follow-up event later in the year potentially in November (date to be confirmed).

The event generated an income and, after covering costs, produced a profit which will be added to the Town Council Community Fund. A raffle held on the night also raised £122, which has been donated to The Hwb Torfaen.

In summary, the event was a great success and marks the first in some time to generate income for the Town Council.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

14. To receive a working group update and make any relevant determinations regarding the VJ - Day 80 Anniversary event on the 16th of August 2025.

Agenda item fourteen was deferred to the June 2025 Full Council meeting.

Resolved: Members noted the deferral.

15. To discuss and make any relevant determinations in relation to the current position of TCBC's Community Review.

At this point TCBC Cllrs Jones and Horler has left the meeting.

The Chief Officer provided members with an update on the Community Review process and briefed newly appointed Cllrs.

The review began in January 2023. During 2023 and 2024, Blaenavon Town Council submitted two detailed responses to the Community Review Task and Finish Group.

At a meeting in November 2024, the Council raised several concerns and requested access to task and finish group meeting minutes. To date, no minutes or formal responses have been received, leading members to feel that the Council's input is being disregarded.

In February 2025, the Chief Officer, on behalf of the Council, wrote to Cllr Anthony Hunt (Leader of TCBC) outlining concerns in detail. However, no response has been received.

Cllr Cowles informed members that he had spoken directly with Cllr Hunt, who confirmed a meeting had taken place with the Elections Manager, Caroline Genever-Jones.

The outcome was that whilst the task and finish group are happy to keep East and West wards, they are continuing to recommend a reduction in Cllr numbers from 12 – 10.

A detailed discussion took place amongst members, and it was proposed that a formal complaint be submitted to Torfaen County Borough Council regarding the management of the review process by the Elections Manager.

Members also agreed to establish a working group comprising of Cllrs Evans, Cowles, Wheeler, Matthews, and the Chief Officer.

This was proposed by Cllr Beavan and seconded by Cllr Parfitt.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: The Chief Officer to make a formal complaint on behalf of Blaenavon Town Council to TCBC regarding the mismanagement of the community review process by the elections manager.

16. To discuss and make any relevant determinations relating to the current state of conservation regarding Ty Mawr.

Prior to leaving the meeting, Cllr Horler provided an update under agenda item four, informing members that a new party has expressed interest in the development of Ty Mawr House.

Members agreed that no determinations could be made until further information is received.

The decision to withdraw the proposal for community donations which had been shared on social media was well received by members.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

17. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding the appointment of a Blaenavon Town Council Chaplain

As requested by members, the Chief Officer conducted further enquiries regarding the potential appointment of a Town Council Chaplain, including seeking advice in line with the Equality Act 2010. This information was circulated to all members ahead of the meeting.

The Chief Officer provided a brief overview, noting that the information was largely self-explanatory. It was clarified that the role of Chaplain would be advisory, offering guidance and support.

Clergy may be invited to participate in civic events such as remembrance services or by offering prayers and blessings, but the Chaplain would not have voting rights.

If appointed, the position could be reviewed on an annual basis, with the option to include representatives from other groups as deemed appropriate.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles to appoint a town council Chaplain. This was seconded by Cllr Lewis.

Cllr Griffin proposed that the council does not appoint a Chaplain.

There was no seconder for Cllr Griffins amendment.

Cllrs Wheeler and Porter abstained from voting.

Cllr Griffin voted against appointing a Town Council Chaplain.

All other members in agreement.

Resolved: To appoint a town council Chaplain. Chief Officer to set out terms of reference for the position.

18. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding additional memberships on to the Exploring and Enjoying the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape Working Group.

In March 2025 Blaenavon Town Council accepted the invitation to chair the Exploring and Enjoying the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape Working Group.

For the remainder of the current council term, it was suggested that Cllr Matthews and the Chief Officer be added to the working group.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Cllr Matthews and the Chief officer to be appointed to the Exploring and Enjoying the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape Working Group.

19. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding a request by One Voice Wales for Blaenavon Town Council to make a presentation at the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) annual conference in Llandudno on the 18th of June 2025.

Following the Council's success at the One Voice Wales National Innovative Practice Awards, the Chief Officer and Cllr Matthews were invited to deliver a presentation at the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Annual Conference in Llandudno.

The invitation was extended after the WLGA, who attended the conference in Builth Wells and took part in the National Awards assessment panel, contacted One Voice Wales.

This opportunity not only highlights Blaenavon Town Council's achievements but also provides a platform to share best practice with town and community councils across Wales, with representatives from all twenty-two unitary authorities in attendance.

As Cllr Matthews is unable to attend, Cllr Cowles will represent the Council at the event. The WLGA will provide accommodation, and a request was made to cover travel expenses for both the Chief Officer and Cllr Cowles.

It was proposed by Cllr Beavan and seconded by Cllr Griffin that the Council support the request for travel expenses.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Travelling expenses supported for attendance at the WLGA Annual Conference.

20. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding the proposed closure of the Heritage Centre Blaenavon during Bank Holidays.

Cllr Lewis provided members with an update regarding the Heritage Centre's revised opening days.

Staff had received an email from their manager informing them that the Heritage Centre will no longer open on Bank Holiday Mondays. This decision, made by Tim Monkton and Gill Lewis, was implemented with immediate effect.

The rationale given was to ensure consistency across teams, as the Pontypool Market team does not operate on Bank Holidays. It was noted that the Heritage Centre may open for specific events, and Front Row Foods could choose to open independently if they wished, although they have declined to do so.

Cllr Cowles expressed concern that he had not been made aware of the decision and had not received any communication from Tim Monkton regarding the change.

Members discussed the matter at length and expressed strong disappointment at the decision to close the Heritage Centre on Bank Holidays. Concerns were raised about the negative impact on heritage, tourism, and the lack of a cohesive strategic approach.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles that a letter be sent to Tim Monkton expressing the Council's strong opposition to the closure of the Heritage Centre on Bank Holidays.

This was seconded by Cllr Hunt.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: That the Chief Officer writes to Tim Monkton on behalf of Blaenavon Town Council expressing the Council's strong opposition to the closure of the Heritage Centre on Bank Holidays.

21. To discuss and make a determination regarding potential Town Council projects for allocation into the Project Action Plan 2025/26. 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:** Two storey extension
- **LOCATION:** 6 Overview Court, Blaenavon.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Two storey extension & roof works
- **LOCATION:** School House, 6 Oxford Terrace, Forgeside, Blaenavon.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Demolition & replacement of extension, path works and balustrade, steps, & vision panels.
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit, Blaenavon

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Garage conversion.
- **LOCATION:** Parklands, Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

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

The Chief Officer forwarded two emails to all members prior to the meeting.

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

Mr Lewis thanked the town council on behalf of National Museum Wales, in particular Big Pit, for their generosity and continued support of the apprenticeships at Bit Pit National Coal Museum.

- **Email from Sanja Stiglic – Slovenian Ambassador**

The Ambassador expressed her sincere thanks to Blaenavon Town Council for the warm hospitality and generous welcome extended during her recent visit.

She shared how much she had enjoyed the visit and noted she was especially impressed by the tour of local attractions thoughtfully arranged by the Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Evans and seconded by Cllr Hunt to share the Ambassadors letter of thanks to the town council's social media platforms.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Ambassadors letter to be shared on social media

Meeting ended at 20.00 hrs

Signed Chairman:



Date: 25/06/25.