



Summary (Decisions) of the Full Council meeting of Blaenavon Town Council held on **Wednesday the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2025 at 6:30 pm** on a hybrid basis in the council chamber at **101 High Street Blaenavon** and remotely in accordance with the **Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**

The full minutes of the meeting are subject to confirmation at the Full Council meeting to be held on **Wednesday the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2025**.

**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-op Candidate, Cllr J. Jones, Cllr N. Horler.

**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

**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.

**Resolved:** Sylvia Maslen appointed as a Blaenavon Town Councillor.

**8. Council Meetings: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2025.**

Minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

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

All members in agreement.

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

**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.

**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.

**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

