



15th November 2023

Dear Councillor.

Pursuant to the requirements of **Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**, you are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Full Council which will be held on a hybrid basis in the Council Chamber at **101, High Street, Blaenavon** and remotely on **Wednesday the 22nd of November 2023 commencing at 6:30pm** for the purpose of transacting the business shown in the agenda set below.

Should you wish to attend the meeting remotely, you should contact the Chief Officer to the Council to request a remote invitation.

Members of the public have the right to ask questions at Council meetings and to speak in Welsh or English, provided that at least three working days' notice in writing of the question has been provided to the Chief Officer.

Agenda

1. To receive any questions from the public.
2. To receive and accept apologies.
3. **Declarations of Interest:** Members are invited to declare any interests they may have in any items on the agenda.
4. **Mayor's Announcements:** To receive the mayor's announcements.
5. **Council Meeting:** To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 25th of October 2023.
6. **Chief Officer's Update:** To receive the Chief Officer's update.
7. To receive Cllr updates regarding recent attendance at outside bodies committee meetings, together with any relevant community / partnership engagement.
8. To receive an update from Sophie Johnson - Community Development and Wellbeing Officer (**November 2023**)
9. To receive, discuss and ratify the Annual Return and Audit Opinion for 2022/23.

10. To receive an update from the Town Council's Wind Farm working group and make a determination regarding the Town Council's initial response to RWE consultation 2023.
11. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding TCBC's initial recommendations relating to the Community Review 2023.
12. To discuss and make any relevant determinations in relation to the creation of Town Council Youth Representatives in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.
13. To receive, discuss and note the Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2024-25.
14. To receive an update and to discuss / review the Town Council Civic Event 2023.
15. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding a quote from Enerveo relating to the erection and removal of the Xmas lights for 2023.
16. To receive an update and to discuss / review the Remembrance Day Parade 2023.
17. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding a request from the Garnsychan Partnership, requesting a letter of support from the Town Council for their proposed Paint Project.
18. To discuss and make a determination regarding potential Town Council projects for allocation into the Project Action Plan 2023/24. Relevant updates or new projects as notified.
 - 11-16 Gym Sessions - Sophie Johnson.
 - Yoga Sessions Project - Sophie Johnson.
 - Christmas Lights Competition Project - Sophie Johnson.
19. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding planning applications.
 - RMCA/23/P/0651/LBC
 - TBRA/23/P/0688/TPO
 - RMCA/23/P/0314/LBC
 - MMCA/23/P/0653/FUL
20. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding donation requests.
 - Johnathan Gibbs - Front Row Foods
 - Sian Shore - Avondale Residents.
 - Angela Lewis – Over 50's Forum.
21. To receive, discuss and make any relevant determinations concerning items relating to correspondence.

- An e-mail received from Martin Shipton associate editor at Nation Cymru regarding the recently published Town Council newsletter - Email received 15/11/23.
- A card received from Mr and Mrs Colin Roberts.

22. Other Matters (At the discretion of the Chairman)

Yours Faithfully.



Kevin Warren. MIoL. FCMI.
Chief Officer & RFO
Blaenavon Town Council



Summary (Notes) of the Full Council meeting of Blaenavon Town Council held on **Wednesday the 22nd of November 2023 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 24th of January 2024**.

In attendance:

Councillors: Cllr. N. Matthews (In the Chair) A. Beavan, S. Keen, M. Wheeler, I. Parfitt, L. Cowles, A. Jones, L. Evans (On Line)

Officers: Kevin Warren (Chief Officer), Sophie Johnson (Community Wellbeing Development Officer)

Visitors: None present.

Members of public: None present.

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.

None received.

2. To receive and accept apologies.

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

- Cllr Porter – Union meeting
- Cllr Harris – Work commitment.
- Cllr Hunt – Hospital appointment.
- Cllr James – Childcare.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Apologies accepted.

3. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Keen – Agenda item 20 – Personal interest.

Resolved: Declarations of interest noted by members.

5. Council Meeting: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 25th of October 2023.

The minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments being offered.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Keen that the minutes be accepted.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Minutes approved as a true and accurate record.

9. To receive, discuss and ratify the Annual Return and Audit Opinion for 2022/23.

The Chief Officer provided members with an overview of the audit opinion 2022/23 which had been sent to members ahead of the meeting, this was presented via the projector screen.

It was explained that the audit opinion from Audit Wales was unqualified with no recommendations relating to the Town Council's Financial Management / Governance.

The Chief Officer outlined to members that this was the first Triennial Audit as part of Audit Wales's new arrangements which was required a lot of work and that as a Council, we should be proud of the work undertaken.

Cllr Matthews recognised that the triennial audit was a rigorous process and expressed thanks to the Chief Officer for the work undertaken to achieve an unqualified audit opinion.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Keen to ratify the audit opinion for 2022/23.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Audit opinion 2022/23 noted and ratified by members.

10. To receive an update from the Town Council's Wind Farm working group and make a determination regarding the Town Council's initial response to RWE consultation 2023.

Cllr Matthews explained to members that the working group had met recently and had compiled a draft response based on the information available from numerous sources and updates received.

The draft response had been sent to members ahead of the meeting for their perusal. Cllr Matthews then progressed through the document which had been shared via the projector screen.

Cllr Matthews asked if members had any questions.

Cllr Cowles commented on the content and quality of the response document that had been compiled by Cllr Matthews and thanked him for an excellent document, also the work conducted by the windfarm working group.

The response collectively from the Town Council will provide RWE with food for thought especially in terms of the heritage landscape and that the Council have raised these concerns at an early stage. It will be interesting to see what the response from RWE will be?

Cllr Wheeler raised a point in relation to the Blaenavon bog and this was a location used by bird watchers from across the county. There are rare Owl and Grouse species located in this area.

Cllr Matthews explained that he adds an amendment to the document would include other species.

The Chief Officer explained that the document was the Council's preferred position and offered advice to members not to sway away from this, indicating that this document is a collective Town Council agreement, and if asked by residents then members should refer them to this document.

Cllr Matthews asked members subject to the amendment in relation to other species were they in agreement with the response document.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Members accepted the Town Council's initial response to RWE consultation 2023.

Cllrs Matthews proposed that the Chief Officer submits the initial response to RWE in advance of the consultation close date of the 4/12/23.

This was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllr Jones.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to forward the Town Council's response to RWE by the 4/12/23

11. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding TCBC's initial recommendations relating to the Community Review 2023.

The Chief Officer reminded members that the Town Council had submitted their response to TCBC regarding the Community Review which was detailed in particular pages 8,9 and 10 referencing section 3 namely Cllr numbers.

It was further explained that the Chief Officer attended a meeting at the Civic Centre on the 9/11/23 to discuss the recommendations made by TCBC for Blaenavon as part of the Community Review.

The Chief Officer outlined the recommendations to members namely reducing East and West wards to one single ward and the reduction of Cllr numbers from 12 to 10.

It was further explained that during the meeting the Chief Officer challenged the officers and Cllr Yeowell to explain the rebuttals to the Town Council's recommendation documented within pages 8,9 and 10.

As a result of the response from TCBC the Chief Officer requested that a further meeting be arranged for TCBC to explain to Blaenavon Town Councillors what the rebuttals were. This meeting was held on the 15/11/23 with the Chief Officer, Cllrs Matthews, Cowles, and Jones present.

Cllr Matthews explained to members that he was not impressed with the responses from the officer or chair of the TCBC working group relating to the recommendations and felt that there was no consultation regarding the Town Council's response and rationale stating that there was a pre occupation throughout relating to the ratio of elected members linked to the electorate that they wanted to apply across the borough.

Cllr Matthews explained that the recommendations should reflect the ambitions of the Town Council and what it actually does further explaining that to reduce two Cllr would create a saving of £416 annually. This is clearly value for money based on the knowledge and expertise that Cllrs contribute to the Town Council.

It was further noted that TCBC are operating a one size fits all approach and were inconsistent in relation to their terms of reference involving being prescriptive and non-prescriptive concerning the number of Cllrs. Cllr Matthews explained that throughout the meeting there was no attempt to counter the arguments that the Council had explained and alluded to.

Cllr Jones added that in his opinion, TCBC failed to understand what the Town Council were talking about. Cllr Cowles added that in his view, TCBC clearly wanted to make Cllr numbers uniform across Torfaen relating to population and Cllr numbers and if that is the case what was the point of implementing a working group and subsequently have a consultation.

Cllrs Cowles stated that they were unable to provide any rebuttals on Cllr numbers because quite clearly, this would not be possible based on knowledge, and if they were aware, then

clearly, they would not be able to offer rebuttals regarding the Council's position on pages 8,9 and 10 contained within the review response.

Cllr Cowles added that moving forward the Council need to get the community on board and look at ways to challenge the proposal by TCBC and agreed with Cllrs Matthews, Jones, and the Chief Officer.

Cllr Jones reiterated that the Council had been reduced by four Cllrs at the last review and explained that the services being delivered to the community by this Town Council is exceptional based on other Councils locally.

A further discussion took place amongst members based what the Council delivers and the importance of having the depth and breadth of diversity and scrutiny that an increased group of Cllrs clearly offer to the community.

The Chief Officer explained to members that the TCBC working group clearly have limited knowledge and understanding regarding what the Council delivers and suggested that the Council writes to the Chief Executive of TCBC highlighting the Council's concerns regarding the Community Review.

Cllr Evans enquired why was the review working group's meeting held in camera and were there minutes taken at that meeting. Cllr Matthews explained that this information would be made available in the future.

Cllr Evans explained to the Chairman that he would now be leaving the Full Council meeting. This was recorded at 54 minutes into the meeting. Cllr Evans then left the meeting.

As a result of the discussions regarding the Community Review, Cllr Matthews proposed that based on the advice of the Chief Officer that a letter be sent outlining the Council's position to key individuals. This was seconded by Cllr Jones

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to send a letter to key individuals outlining the Council's position regarding the recommendations within the Community Review.

12. To discuss and make any relevant determinations in relation to the creation of Town Council Youth Representatives in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Chief Officer provided members with an overview of the process under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and explained that the process would need to be formally launched and advertised.

A selection process would then take place in the form of an interview. The selected panel will be able to attend Town Council meetings but will not be able to vote. The Chief officer suggested a timescale for this indicating January / February 2024 to commence the process.

Cllr Matthews explained to members that this was a positive move based on the fact that the Council are approaching their 50th Anniversary. This would also assist local democracy by enabling younger members of the community to sit around the table.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews to implement the youth representative panel in accordance with the Local Government Wales Measure 2011 in January 2024. This was seconded by Cllr Keen.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to initiate the Youth Representative process in January 2024.

15. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding a quote from Enerveo relating to the erection and removal of the Xmas lights for 2023.

The Chief Officer presented to members via the projector screen an email from Mr Chris Wallace the depot manager for Enerveo. The email outlined the cost for the erection, removal, and commissioning of the Xmas lights across the town which was quoted as £7,686 plus VAT.

The rationale for the motion was to highlight the cost of the service provided. The Chief Officer explained that the cost was expensive in terms of the Council's size, but the service covered Forgeside and Garyn - yr – erw.

The Chief Officer explained that the service was difficult to go out to tender for such specialist works and that Enerveo are the preferred contractors for TCBC and are used by other Community Councils across the borough.

Members asked what the increase was, it was explained that this was £800 as per the rationale from Enerveo based on factors that were out of their control. The Chief Officer further explained that since he had been in post Enerveo had always been used to carry out the works.

An overview regarding financial regulations was presented, but if this was for specialist works then consideration to accept the quote needed to be taken by members based on the premise that other contractors' services were not available for this type of work / service.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Wheeler to accept the quote presented by Enerveo.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Quote from Enerveo accepted.

17. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding a request from the Garnsychan Partnership, requesting a letter of support from the Town Council for their proposed Paint Project.

The request had been forwarded to members ahead of the meeting and was presented during the meeting via the projector screen.

Cllr Matthews asked members if they were happy to support the project based on the information provided.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Letter of support authorised

18. To discuss and make a determination regarding potential Town Council projects for allocation into the Project Action Plan 2023/24. Relevant updates or new projects as notified.

Three projects were submitted to members by Sophie Johnson for their perusal in advance of the meeting. Sophie provided an overview to members.

- **11-16 Gym Sessions**

Sophie explained to members that they have received the information regarding the review of the Gym Sessions and requested if there were any questions.

Cllr Matthews clarified the cost of the project and in particular the funding received from Bronafon Housing.

It was explained that the annual cost of the project was £2,535 but this has been reduced by £1,000 as a result of the funding from Bronafon in support of the project. The remaining cost to the Council to the end of the project would be £767.

Cllr Parfitt clarified the attendance numbers to date; this was confirmed over a period of sixteen sessions as being six persons per session.

Cllr Parfitt commented and stated that taking into account the funding received then the project continues to its conclusion.

Cllr Cowles commented on the volume of numbers currently in attendance and raised the point that £1,535 for an average of six attendees was still a lot of money and urged members to consider was this value for money.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the cost of the project over the next six months based on attendance figures. This was clarified that the remaining cost is £767.

It was proposed by Cllr Beavan to support the project for the next six months, this was seconded by Cllr Parfitt.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Project authorised.

- **Yoga Sessions Project.**

Sophie provided a brief overview of the project which had been sent to members. It was explained that due to the feedback from the community regarding the Celt Plus sessions previously delivered, she had approached a local Yoga instructor who was looking to set up sessions in Blaenavon during the evening.

The request is to support the venue costs for a trial period of three months and contributions from the public for the class would be voluntary.

Cllr Matthews requested why the Celt Plus sessions were discontinued. It was explained that their project wanted attendees to sign up to courses but the uptake on this was low, therefore the sessions were stopped.

Cllrs queried the volume of attendees who attended the Celt Plus project. This was confirmed as approximately fifteen. Also would this be a three month trial and where would the sessions be held.

Sophie explained that it would be a three month only subsidy for the venue and these would be held at the active living centre dance studio 6pm – 7pm.

It was proposed by Cllr Wheeler and seconded by Cllr Keen to support the project.
All members in agreement.

Resolved: Project authorised.

- **Christmas Lights Competition Project.**

Sophie provided a brief overview of the project to receive Cllrs views based on last year's competition.

It was explained that the proposal is to run a competition for residents and local businesses with prizes for the winners on a 1st 2nd 3rd basis which would support community engagement within Blaenavon.

A detailed discussion took place amongst members regarding the competition and prizes and the judging process.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones to support the project with vouchers as prizes.

All members were in agreement.

Resolved: Project authorised with vouchers as prizes.

A further discussion took place amongst members regarding which businesses would be supplying the vouchers and should this be Blaenavon businesses only. All members felt that the vouchers should be supplied by Blaenavon businesses.

A further discussion took place in relation to who would select the businesses to supply vouchers.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllrs Jones that the Town Council officers be provided with delegation to make the decision.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Town Council officers be provided with delegation to make the decision on which Blaenavon businesses supply the prize vouchers.

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

The Chief Officer had forwarded the planning applications to members ahead of the meeting and they were presented as follows.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Alteration of heating and ventilation systems to the Canteen and Kitchen areas to provide an energy efficient building. Installation of air circulation ductwork, insulated refrigeration pipework, heat recovery unit and external air source heat pump. Replace kitchen window with louvred air intake panel. Removal of suspended ceilings in Canteen and wash up areas to be replaced with plaster finish to concrete soffit of roof slab. New light fittings to Canteen, servery, wash up and Kitchen store.
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit (Blaenafon) Trust Ltd, Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate, Blaenavon

Resolved. No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Fell lime tree.
- **LOCATION:** The Park, Blaenavon.

Resolved. No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Re-rendering of south-west elevation of Chapel.
- **LOCATION:** Moriah Chapel, Broad Street, Blaenavon.

Resolved. No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Proposed subdivision of upper floor apartment to two apartments and external alterations including roof lights, light well, bin store and fence
- **LOCATION:** 32 Broad Street, Blaenavon, Pontypool

Resolved. No objections from members.

20. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding donation requests.

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

Members discussed the donation requests, namely:

- Johnathan Gibbs – Front Row Foods.

Jonathan requested financial assistance of £250 from the Town Council to purchase the following to provide a free Xmas lunch and that a ‘Go Fund me’ page has already been established to support the project.

£150 - Turkeys

£100 - Vegetables for Dinner

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the request.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones not to accept the request based on the information provided. If members decided to make a personal donation, then this should be encouraged.

All members in agreement.

Resolved. Donation of £250 not authorised.

- Angela Lewis – Over 50’s Forum

Angela requested financial assistance of £250 from the Town Council to purchase a microphone and speaker for use within the Over 50s forum meetings to support their members who have difficulty understanding guest speakers.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the request.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Beavan to approve the request.

All members in agreement.

Resolved. Donation of £250 authorised. Chief Officer to facilitate the transaction.

- Sian Shore - Avondale Residents

Sian requested financial assistance from the Town Council to support a Christmas party for elderly residents of Avondale and Avon Road Blaenavon to the cover costs of food, tableware, and small raffle prizes.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the request, and it was established that the residents were not a constituted group.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones not to support the request on the basis that the group were not constituted.

Cllr Keen abstained. All other members in agreement.

Resolved. Donation not authorised due to the group not being constituted.

Meeting ended at 20:09 hrs.



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22nd of NOVEMBER 2023 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) A. Beavan, S. Keen, M. Wheeler, I. Parfitt, L. Cowles, A. Jones, L. Evans (On Line)

Officers: Kevin Warren (Chief Officer), Sophie Johnson (Community Wellbeing 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 Porter – Union meeting
- Cllr Harris – Work commitment.
- Cllr Hunt – Hospital appointment.
- Cllr James – Childcare.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Apologies accepted.

3. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Keen – Agenda item 20 – Personal interest.

Resolved: Declarations of interest noted by members.

4. 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.

- 27/10/2023 - Met with Marko Funkl, Mayor of Hrastnik concerning twinning opportunities with Blaenavon Town Council – along with Chief Officer, Cllrs Beavan and Cowles.
- 3/11/2023 - Met with Emma Davies McIntosh to discuss agenda setting for the Healthy Blaenavon Strategic Partnership Meeting.
- 3/11/2023 - Attended and presided at the Blaenavon Town Council Civic Event.
- 6/11/2023 - Met with Dr Camille Westmont of Cambridge University to be interviewed concerning the impact of mining on Welsh political thought.
- 8/11/2023 - Chaired Finance Meeting and handed out Civic Awards to Aislinn Harris and Leighton Williams.
- 9/11/2023 - Met with representatives of the Blaenavon Branch of the Royal British Legion to discuss arrangements for the 2023 Remembrance Day Parade.
- 10/11/2023 - Attended and participated in the RWE Abertillery Wind Farm Consultation at Blaenavon Workmen's Hall.
- 11/11/2023 - Attended the Armistice Day Service at the Blaenavon Cenotaph, alongside Cllr Alan Jones.
- 11/11/2023 - Attended and spoke at the opening of Blaenavon Camera Club.
- 12/11/2023 - Participated in the 2023 Blaenavon Remembrance Day Parade and laid a wreath at the Cenotaph on behalf of Blaenavon Town Council.
- 15/11/2023 - Met with Cllr Nathan Yeowell and Caroline Genever Jones to raise concerns about Torfaen Council's recommendations to the community review.
- 16/11/2023 - Chaired the Healthy Blaenavon Strategic Partnership Board.

- 17/11/2023 - Attended the Blaenavon Town Council Abertillery Wind Farm Working Group to discuss the Town Council's response to the consultation.
- 18/11/2023 - Attended and participated in the Blaenavon Town Council Christmas Market at Blaenavon Workmen's Hall.
- 21/11/2023 - Attended a meeting with Rebecca Hartley, Rachel Jowitt and Rachel Standfield, and TCBC Cllrs Janet Jones and Nick Horler concerning the Abertillery Wind Farm Consultation.

Cllr Matthews also explained that he has had regular meetings with officers and Cllrs throughout the month.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

5. Council Meeting: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 25th of October 2023.

The minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments being offered.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Keen 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 13 within the minutes as per the instructions from members regarding the Youth Representative panel. The Chief Officer explained that he has not had the time to progress this due to other priorities, but this is a motion listed at item 12.

Item 18 within the minutes as per the instructions from members, £300 has been transacted to Stori.

Item 20 within the minutes as per the instructions from members. £250 has been transacted to Rebecca Osmond, and she has confirmed receipt.

Item 21 within the minutes as per the instructions from members. £250 has been transacted to Blaenavon Blues, and they have confirmed receipt.

The Chief Officer has also written to the Mic Morris Trust and explained the Council's decision, confirming that he will update them once the budget setting process has been completed.

On the 3/11/23 together with Cllr and officers the Chief Officer attended the Civic Awards evening at the Constitutional Club.

On the 8/11/23 the Chief Officer attended the Society of Local Councils Clerks conference in partnership with OVW and confirmed that he has forwarded to members the presentation regarding Local Council's Financial Governance as presented by Deryck Evans from Audit Wales and could not advise strongly enough members' duties in relation to Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness.

On the 9/11/23 the Chief Officer attended a Torfaen Clerk's briefing in relation to the Community Review Recommendations by TCBC. In terms of Blaenavon, he challenged TCBC officers and the chair of the working Group Cllr Yeowel regarding their rebuttals for pages 8,9 and 10 within the Council's community review response.

As a result, the Chief Officer has requested a one to one meeting with them and other Cllrs to explain their rationale. It was confirmed that this meeting took place on the 15/11/23 and this will be discussed further at item 11 within the agenda.

On the 17/11/23 the Chief Officer attended a meeting in the Council chamber with the Mayor, Cllrs Hunt, Cowles, and Lewis as part of the working group to formulate a Town Council response to the Wind farm consultation. This would be discussed further at Item 10 within the agenda.

On the 18/11/23 the Chief Officer attended the Town Council's Xmas Market, and this was another successful event.

Members were informed that the majority of the Chief Officers time since the last meeting has been finalising the 2022/23 Audit for which the opinion has now been received. This will be discussed further at item 9 within the agenda.

Also he has been busy managing the event booklets for the Civic Awards, Remembrance Day and Xmas Lights switch on and the Town Council newsletter.

Since the last meeting, the Chief Officer has held weekly briefing session with the mayor discussing Council operational and financial matters and also operational meetings with fellow officers relating to future planning and current projects.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

7. To receive Cllr updates regarding recent attendance at outside bodies committee meetings.

Cllr Evans explained to members that he had recently attended the Blaenavon Heritage Steering Group meeting which discussed the Abertillery windfarm proposal. Also present were TCBC borough Councillors.

During the meeting a presentation was provided by Mr Justin Jones explaining an overview of the PAC process and the shortfalls within this. It was explained by Cllr Evans that the answers presented by RWE at the public consultation process have not been formally assessed by planners.

It was further explained that the fundamental point revolved around the area involving Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and that RWE had misinterpreted this in terms of industrial landscape and this was supported by CADW.

In short, the answers provided by RWE in terms of industrial landscape could potentially be incorrect. Other points raised were that Big Pit mining museum have not been provided with detailed drawings relating to mine workings at the location.

Cllr Evans outlined that the focus of the scrutiny is focused on the impact upon the World Heritage site.

The Chairman Cllr Matthews thanked Cllr Evans for his update.

Cllr Matthews then provided members with an update in relation to the Healthy Blaenavon Partnership meeting and explained that the main action from the meeting was a proposed public meeting during the evening of the 25/1/24, looking at bringing businesses, individuals, and other organisations together with a view to sharing the aims and objectives of the partnership group.

An additional aim was to launch a social media positivity charter in the hope that groups and individuals would sign up to.

Cllr Matthews also explained that a presentation has been sent to members relating to the Windows to Positivity Project compiled by Ashleigh Taylor who had requested match funding from the Council in support of the project.

Due to the project being time sensitive, Cllr Matthews has instructed the Chief Officer to arrange an extraordinary meeting for the 6/12/23 for Ashleigh Taylor to present the project to members for consideration to award funding.

Resolved: Members noted the updates.

8. To receive an update from Sophie Johnson - Community Development and Wellbeing Officer (November 2023).

Members were provided with the following update.

- Half term activities, swimming session and cook stars session, were well attended with positive feedback received from the community.
- Pumpkin competition was also run over half term – 40 pumpkins were collected from Ty Poeth Farm.

All 40 pumpkins were allocated on a one per family basis, children received a Halloween goodie bag each containing sweets, outdoor treasure hunt sheet, pumpkin recipe ideas and Halloween related items. The Council received 60 entries with those

not collecting a pumpkin also entering. The winners received a cauldron of prizes which included sports equipment, games, baking sets, craft items, sweets, and water bottles.

- Attended the Civic Awards with fellow officers and councillors.
- Attended meetings with the TCBC Community Capacity builder for Blaenavon, to discuss ways of working together. Continue to have weekly meetings.
- In partnership with TCBC Multiply team and Garnsychan Partnership the cooking on a budget course will be continuing with the new course starting last week and running for five weeks. This course will look at how to create and take away inspired meals on a budget.
- Continue to work alongside partners on Torfaen Welling Friends initiative.
- Worked with Building Resilient Communities officer to identify gaps in provision, this has resulted in a free Pilates class being offered by BRC, which Sophie has helped promote to the community.
- Continue to work with TCBC Multiply team to help identify sessions and venues in the town. They are now running Number Tots sessions in the library on Wednesdays between 10:30am and 11:30am and a three week Lunch and Learn session on Wednesdays 12:30 – 2:30pm at the Heritage Centre.
- Continue to attend various groups and activities to engage with and support residents signposting them to other organisations and individuals who can also offer support.
- Contributed to the planning and delivery of the Christmas Market event.
- Continue to plan the Christmas lights switch on taking place on Friday 24th November.
- Working alongside Bron Afon ‘Helping Working Families’ team to look at working on various projects together in the town, including distributing family meal bags.
- Working with TCBC Litter Prevention officer and the Eco Council at BHVC school to create anti-litter posters and identify areas to place these across the town.
- Attended the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Learning and Engagement working group to review previous management plan and plan future actions of the group.
- Attended a meeting with Front Row Food and Dale Clint regarding holding weekly men’s mental health support group at the Heritage Café.

- Met with TCBCs Foundational Economy Project Officer regarding opportunities to support residents looking to set up new businesses in the town.
- Planning for Christmas Film Club and lunch, which takes place on Friday 15th December.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

9. To receive, discuss and ratify the Annual Return and Audit Opinion for 2022/23.

The Chief Officer provided members with an overview of the audit opinion 2022/23 which had been sent to members ahead of the meeting, this was presented via the projector screen.

It was explained that the audit opinion from Audit Wales was unqualified with no recommendations relating to the Town Council's Financial Management / Governance.

The Chief Officer outlined to members that this was the first Triennial Audit as part of Audit Wales's new arrangements which was required a lot of work and that as a Council, we should be proud of the work undertaken.

Cllr Matthews recognised that the triennial audit was a rigorous process and expressed thanks to the Chief Officer for the work undertaken to achieve an unqualified audit opinion.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Keen to ratify the audit opinion for 2022/23.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Audit opinion 2022/23 noted and ratified by members.

10. To receive an update from the Town Council's Wind Farm working group and make a determination regarding the Town Council's initial response to RWE consultation 2023.

Cllr Matthews explained to members that the working group had met recently and had compiled a draft response based on the information available from numerous sources and updates received.

The draft response had been sent to members ahead of the meeting for their perusal. Cllr Matthews then progressed through the document which had been shared via the projector screen.

Cllr Matthews asked if members had any questions.

Cllr Cowles commented on the content and quality of the response document that had been compiled by Cllr Matthews and thanked him for an excellent document, also the work conducted by the windfarm working group.

The response collectively from the Town Council will provide RWE with food for thought especially in terms of the heritage landscape and that the Council have raised these concerns at an early stage. It will be interesting to see what the response from RWE will be?

Cllr Wheeler raised a point in relation to the Blaenavon bog and this was a location used by bird watchers from across the county. There are rare Owl and Grouse species located in this area.

Cllr Matthews explained that he adds an amendment to the document would include other species.

The Chief Officer explained that the document was the Council's preferred position and offered advice to members not to sway away from this, indicating that this document is a collective Town Council agreement, and if asked by residents then members should refer them to this document.

Cllr Matthews asked members subject to the amendment in relation to other species were they in agreement with the response document.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Members accepted the Town Council's initial response to RWE consultation 2023.

Cllrs Matthews proposed that the Chief Officer submits the initial response to RWE in advance of the consultation close date of the 4/12/23.

This was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllr Jones.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to forward the Town Council's response to RWE by the 4/12/23

11. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding TCBC's initial recommendations relating to the Community Review 2023.

The Chief Officer reminded members that the Town Council had submitted their response to TCBC regarding the Community Review which was detailed in particular pages 8,9 and 10 referencing section 3 namely Cllr numbers.

It was further explained that the Chief Officer attended a meeting at the Civic Centre on the 9/11/23 to discuss the recommendations made by TCBC for Blaenavon as part of the Community Review.

The Chief Officer outlined the recommendations to members namely reducing East and West wards to one single ward and the reduction of Cllr numbers from 12 to 10.

It was further explained that during the meeting the Chief Officer challenged the officers and Cllr Yeowell to explain the rebuttals to the Town Council's recommendation documented within pages 8,9 and 10.

As a result of the response from TCBC the Chief Officer requested that a further meeting be arranged for TCBC to explain to Blaenavon Town Councillors what the rebuttals were. This meeting was held on the 15/11/23 with the Chief Officer, Cllrs Matthews, Cowles, and Jones present.

Cllr Matthews explained to members that he was not impressed with the responses from the officer or chair of the TCBC working group relating to the recommendations and felt that there was no consultation regarding the Town Council's response and rationale stating that there was a pre occupation throughout relating to the ratio of elected members linked to the electorate that they wanted to apply across the borough.

Cllr Matthews explained that the recommendations should reflect the ambitions of the Town Council and what it actually does further explaining that to reduce two Cllr would create a saving of £416 annually. This is clearly value for money based on the knowledge and expertise that Cllrs contribute to the Town Council.

It was further noted that TCBC are operating a one size fits all approach and were inconsistent in relation to their terms of reference involving being prescriptive and non-prescriptive concerning the number of Cllrs. Cllr Matthews explained that throughout the meeting there was no attempt to counter the arguments that the Council had explained and alluded to.

Cllr Jones added that in his opinion, TCBC failed to understand what the Town Council were talking about. Cllr Cowles added that in his view, TCBC clearly wanted to make Cllr numbers uniform across Torfaen relating to population and Cllr numbers and if that is the case what was the point of implementing a working group and subsequently have a consultation.

Cllrs Cowles stated that they were unable to provide any rebuttals on Cllr numbers because quite clearly, this would not be possible based on knowledge, and if they were aware, then clearly, they would not be able to offer rebuttals regarding the Council's position on pages 8,9 and 10 contained within the review response.

Cllr Cowles added that moving forward the Council need to get the community on board and look at ways to challenge the proposal by TCBC and agreed with Cllrs Matthews, Jones, and the Chief Officer.

Cllr Jones reiterated that the Council had been reduced by four Cllrs at the last review and explained that the services being delivered to the community by this Town Council is exceptional based on other Councils locally.

A further discussion took place amongst members based what the Council delivers and the importance of having the depth and breadth of diversity and scrutiny that an increased group of Cllrs clearly offer to the community.

The Chief Officer explained to members that the TCBC working group clearly have limited knowledge and understanding regarding what the Council delivers and suggested that the Council writes to the Chief Executive of TCBC highlighting the Council's concerns regarding the Community Review.

Cllr Evans enquired why was the review working group's meeting held in camera and were there minutes taken at that meeting. Cllr Matthews explained that this information would be made available in the future.

Cllr Evans explained to the Chairman that he would now be leaving the Full Council meeting. This was recorded at 54 minutes into the meeting. Cllr Evans then left the meeting.

As a result of the discussions regarding the Community Review, Cllr Matthews proposed that based on the advice of the Chief Officer that a letter be sent outlining the Council's position to key individuals. This was seconded by Cllr Jones

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to send a letter to key individuals outlining the Council's position regarding the recommendations within the Community Review.

12. To discuss and make any relevant determinations in relation to the creation of Town Council Youth Representatives in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Chief Officer provided members with an overview of the process under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and explained that the process would need to be formally launched and advertised.

A selection process would then take place in the form of an interview. The selected panel will be able to attend Town Council meetings but will not be able to vote. The Chief officer suggested a timescale for this indicating January / February 2024 to commence the process.

Cllr Matthews explained to members that this was a positive move based on the fact that the Council are approaching their 50th Anniversary. This would also assist local democracy by enabling younger members of the community to sit around the table.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews to implement the youth representative panel in accordance with the Local Government Wales Measure 2011 in January 2024. This was seconded by Cllr Keen.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to initiate the Youth Representative process in January 2024.

13. To receive, discuss and note the Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2024-25

The Chief Officer provided members with an overview of the Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2024-25 and presented this via the projector screen.

It was explained that if an identified act and section was not available then section 137 can be used to facilitate the spend. This is calculated per elector. There was an increase from 2023/24 from namely £9.93 / elector to £10.81 per elector.

In Blaenavon there are currently 4,510 electors. The annual spending against S137 is usually in the region of £13-£15k which is well within budget.

There were no questions or comments from members.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

14. To receive an update and to discuss / review the Town Council Civic Event 2023

Cllr Matthews asked members for their views regarding the Civic event. A discussion took place amongst members, and it was accepted the event was extremely positive and well attended which has generated plenty of positive feedback.

The event demonstrated what people had achieved within the community especially the younger recipients. This clearly showed community leadership by the Town Council.

Overall an excellent event. All members in agreement

Resolved: Civic Awards evening was received and noted as a successful event.

15. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding a quote from Enerveo relating to the erection and removal of the Xmas lights for 2023.

The Chief Officer presented to members via the projector screen an email from Mr Chris Wallace the depot manager for Enerveo. The email outlined the cost for the erection, removal, and commissioning of the Xmas lights across the town which was quoted as £7,686 plus VAT.

The rationale for the motion was to highlight the cost of the service provided. The Chief Officer explained that the cost was expensive in terms of the Council's size, but the service covered Forgeside and Garyn - yr - erw.

The Chief Officer explained that the service was difficult to go out to tender for such specialist works and that Enerveo are the preferred contractors for TCBC and are used by other Community Councils across the borough.

Members asked what the increase was, it was explained that this was £800 as per the rationale from Enerveo based on factors that were out of their control. The Chief Officer

further explained that since he had been in post Enerveo had always been used to carry out the works.

An overview regarding financial regulations was presented, but if this was for specialist works then consideration to accept the quote needed to be taken by members based on the premise that other contractors' services were not available for this type of work / service.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Wheeler to accept the quote presented by Enerveo.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Quote from Enerveo accepted.

16. To receive an update and to discuss / review the Remembrance Day Parade 2023

Cllr Matthews asked members for their views regarding the Remembrance Day Event 2023. Cllr Beavan explained that the event was extremely well attended considering the bad weather.

Cllrs Matthews reiterated Cllr Beavan's observations and explained that the feedback received was extremely positive and pointed out that the dignitaries in attendance this year was also positive namely the attendance of the Deputy Lord Lieutenant Mr Jack Hanbury – Tenison, Lord Paul Murphy, Nick Thomas Symonds MP, and Lynne Neagle MS.

A discussion took place amongst members who all agreed that it was a positive event.

Resolved. Members Agreed that the Remembrance Day Parade 2023 was a positive event.

17. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding a request from the Garnsychan Partnership, requesting a letter of support from the Town Council for their proposed Paint Project.

The request had been forwarded to members ahead of the meeting and was presented during the meeting via the projector screen.

Cllr Matthews asked members if they were happy to support the project based on the information provided.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Letter of support authorised

18. To discuss and make a determination regarding potential Town Council projects for allocation into the Project Action Plan 2023/24. Relevant updates or new projects as notified.

Three projects were submitted to members by Sophie Johnson for their perusal in advance of the meeting. Sophie provided an overview to members.

- **11-16 Gym Sessions**

Sophie explained to members that they have received the information regarding the review of the Gym Sessions and requested if there were any questions.

Cllr Matthews clarified the cost of the project and in particular the funding received from Bronafon Housing.

It was explained that the annual cost of the project was £2,535 but this has been reduced by £1,000 as a result of the funding from Bronafon in support of the project. The remaining cost to the Council to the end of the project would be £767.

Cllr Parfitt clarified the attendance numbers to date; this was confirmed a over a period of sixteen sessions as being six persons per session.

Cllr Parfitt commented and stated that taking into account the funding received then the project continues to its conclusion.

Cllr Cowles commented on the volume of numbers currently in attendance and raised the point that £1,535 for an average of six attendees was still a lot of money and urged members to consider was this value for money.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the cost of the project over the next six months based on attendance figures. This was clarified that the remaining cost is £767.

It was proposed by Cllr Beavan to support the project for the next six months, this was seconded by Cllr Parfitt.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Project authorised.

- **Yoga Sessions Project.**

Sophie provided a brief overview of the project which had been sent to members. It was explained that due to the feedback from the community regarding the Celt Plus sessions previously delivered, she had approached a local Yoga instructor who was looking to set up sessions in Blaenavon during the evening.

The request is to support the venue costs for a trial period of three months and contributions from the public for the class would be voluntary.

Cllr Matthews requested why the Celt Plus sessions were discontinued. It was explained that their project wanted attendees to sign up to courses but the uptake on this was low, therefore the sessions were stopped.

Cllrs queried the volume of attendees who attended the Celt Plus project. This was confirmed as approximately fifteen. Also would this be a three month trial and where would the sessions be held.

Sophie explained that it would be a three month only subsidy for the venue and these would be held at the active living centre dance studio 6pm – 7pm.

It was proposed by Cllr Wheeler and seconded by Cllr Keen to support the project. All members in agreement.

Resolved: Project authorised.

- **Christmas Lights Competition Project.**

Sophie provided a brief overview of the project to receive Cllrs views based on last year's competition.

It was explained that the proposal is to run a competition for residents and local businesses with prizes for the winners on a 1st 2nd 3rd basis which would support community engagement within Blaenavon.

A detailed discussion took place amongst members regarding the competition and prizes and the judging process.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones to support the project with vouchers as prizes.

All members were in agreement.

Resolved: Project authorised with vouchers as prizes.

A further discussion took place amongst members regarding which businesses would be supplying the vouchers and should this be Blaenavon businesses only. All members felt that the vouchers should be supplied by Blaenavon businesses.

A further discussion took place in relation to who would select the businesses to supply vouchers.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllrs Jones that the Town Council officers be provided with delegation to make the decision.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Town Council officers be provided with delegation to make the decision on which Blaenavon businesses supply the prize vouchers.

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

The Chief Officer had forwarded the planning applications to members ahead of the meeting and they were presented as follows.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Alteration of heating and ventilation systems to the Canteen and Kitchen areas to provide an energy efficient building. Installation of air circulation ductwork, insulated refrigeration pipework, heat recovery unit and external air source heat pump. Replace kitchen window with louvred air intake panel. Removal of suspended ceilings in Canteen and wash up areas to be replaced with plaster finish to concrete soffit of roof slab. New light fittings to Canteen, servery, wash up and Kitchen store.
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit (Blaenafon) Trust Ltd, Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate, Blaenavon

Resolved. No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Fell lime tree.
- **LOCATION:** The Park, Blaenavon.

Resolved. No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Re-rendering of south-west elevation of Chapel.
- **LOCATION:** Moriah Chapel, Broad Street, Blaenavon.

Resolved. No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Proposed subdivision of upper floor apartment to two apartments and external alterations including roof lights, light well, bin store and fence
- **LOCATION:** 32 Broad Street, Blaenavon, Pontypool

Resolved. No objections from members.

20. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding donation requests.

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

Members discussed the donation requests, namely:

- Johnathan Gibbs – Front Row Foods.

Jonathan requested financial assistance of £250 from the Town Council to purchase the following to provide a free Xmas lunch and that a 'Go Fund me' page has already been established to support the project.

£150 - Turkeys

£100 - Vegetables for Dinner

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the request.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones not to accept the request based on the information provided. If members decided to make a personal donation, then this should be encouraged.

All members in agreement.

Resolved. Donation of £250 not authorised.

- Angela Lewis – Over 50's Forum

Angela requested financial assistance of £250 from the Town Council to purchase a microphone and speaker for use within the Over 50s forum meetings to support their members who have difficulty understanding guest speakers.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the request.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Beavan to approve the request.

All members in agreement.

Resolved. Donation of £250 authorised. Chief Officer to facilitate the transaction.

- Sian Shore - Avondale Residents

Sian requested financial assistance from the Town Council to support a Christmas party for elderly residents of Avondale and Avon Road Blaenavon to the cover costs of food, tableware, and small raffle prizes.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the request, and it was established that the residents were not a constituted group.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones not to support the request on the basis that the group were not constituted.

Cllr Keen abstained. All other members in agreement.

Resolved. Donation not authorised due to the group not being constituted.

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

The Chief Officer forwarded to members the relevant email correspondence prior to the meeting for their perusal. There were two items of correspondence.

- **An e-mail received from Martin Shipton associate editor at Nation Cymru regarding the recently published Town Council newsletter - Email received 15/11/23.**

The Chief Officer presented the email to members via the projector screen and summarised the content of the email.

Also summarised was the content of an email forwarded to Mr Shipton from an unidentified person making them aware that the newsletter had been delivered to the residents of Blaenavon and it was not bilingual.

Members were made aware that Mr Shipton published an article within Nation Cymru referencing the Town Council in relation to the newsletter not being bilingual. There is no legal requirement for the Town Council to facilitate a translation.

Members were made aware that within the article a Mihangel Ap Williams was identified as the individual who had sent Mr Shipton the original email. The Chief Officer explained to members that Mr Mihangel Ap Williams had employed to leaflet drop the newsletter.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the content of the email and Nation Cymru article.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllr Cowles to note the article.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Nation Cymru article noted.

- **A card received from Mr and Mrs Colin Roberts**

The card was passed around members for their perusal.

Resolved: Members noted the content of the card.

- **A letter received from Mrs Lane regarding the recent Town Council newsletter.**

The letter was passed around members for their perusal which praised the Council for the publication of the newsletter.

Resolved: Members noted the content of the letter

22. Other Matters (At the discretion of the Chairman)

None presented.

Meeting ended at 20:09 hrs.

Signed Chairman: *N. Matthew*

Date: 24/1/24.

