



**6th February 2024**

Dear Councillor.

Pursuant to the requirements of **Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**, you are hereby summoned to attend the Council Finance meeting which will be held on a hybrid basis in the Council Chamber at **101, High Street, Blaenavon** and remotely on **Wednesday the 14th of February 2024 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.

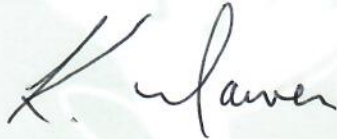
Members of the public have the right to ask questions at Council meetings and to speak in Welsh or English, provided that at least three working days' notice in writing of the question has been provided to the Chief Officer.

### **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. **Council Meetings:** To confirm the minutes of the Council Finance Meeting held on the 10th of January 2024.
5. **Responsible Finance Officer's Update:** To receive and consider the January 2024 financial update.
6. To discuss and make a determination regarding the Town Council's response on the first stage recommendations for the Community Review.
7. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding the vacancy within the Blaenavon west ward.

8. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding the Town Council's planned concert at the Workmen's Hall on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2024.
9. To receive a TCBC update from Cllr Liam Cowles (Ward member for Blaenavon)
10. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding the forthcoming D - Day 80 commemorations on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2024.
11. To discuss and make a determination regarding potential Town Council projects for allocation into the Project Action Plan 2024/25. Relevant updates or new projects as notified.
  - Heritage Easter Egg Trail 2024 – Sophie Johnson
  - Chill Skills Project – Sophie Johnson

Yours Sincerely



Kevin Warren MLoL, FCMI.  
Chief Officer & RFO  
Blaenavon Town Council.







**BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COUNCIL MEETING**  
**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> of FEBRUARY 2024 AT 6.30 PM.**

**Pursuant to the requirements of Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the meeting was held on a hybrid basis in the Council Chamber at 101, High Street Blaenavon and remotely.**

**In attendance:**

Councillors in attendance: N. Matthews, (In the Chair), L. Cowles, J. Hunt, M. Wheeler, I. Parfitt.

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

Visitors: None present.

Member of public: None present.

The finance meeting was opened at 6:30pm by the Mayor Councillor Matthews who welcomed everyone and expressed thanks for attendance.

Cllr Matthews conveyed his concern and disappointment regarding the low turnout of members in attendance.

**1. To receive any questions from the public.**

None received.

**2. To receive and accept apologies.**

- Cllr Harris – Work commitment
- Cllr Evans – Medical matter.
- Cllr Beavan – Holiday.
- Cllr Jones – Bereavement.
- Cllr Keen – Family emergency.
- Cllr Porter – Absent.

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

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Apologies accepted.

**3. Declarations of Interest.**

- Cllr Hunt – Personal – Item 8.

**4. Council Meetings: To confirm the minutes of the Council Finance Meeting held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2024.**

Minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

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

All members in agreement.

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

**5. Responsible Finance Officer's Update: To receive and consider the January 2024 financial updates.**

Mr Warren (RFO) forwarded to members the January 2024 financial reports electronically in advance of the meeting which detailed the following areas:

- Income and Expenditure
- Credit Card Payments
- Cheque Payments
- Bacs Payments
- Cash Book Transactions
- Bank Reconciliation
- Project Expenditure
- Budget
- VAT
- Bank Statements

Mr Warren presented to members each of the above areas of finance for January 2024 and highlighted any relevant information.

Mr Warren informed members that there had been an income of £31.98 which was a credit to the credit card for the return of a faulty Christmas tree to Amazon.

Members were invited to ask any questions in relation to the information presented. There were none.

Members were happy with the presentation.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Hunt that the financial report for January 2024 be accepted.

All members in agreement.



**Resolved:** Financial update for January 2024 accepted by members.

**6. To discuss and make a determination regarding the Town Council's response on the first stage recommendations for the Community Review.**

Cllr Matthews provided members with an update relating to the Community Review explaining that the review for member numbers and boundaries for various Town and Community Councils in Torfaen started last year. This culminated in the Town Council submitting a detailed response to the first stage of consultation in July 2023.

TCBC's recommendations for Blaenavon were as follows.

- Reduction in Blaenavon Town Cllrs from twelve to ten.
- Converging Blaenavon East and West Wards into one single ward.
- Boundaries - no changes to the community boundary.

As a result of the recommendations, it would appear the content contained within the initial response had not been considered. The second stage submission response to TCBC is due by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

Consultation is open to the public and to support this the Town Council have shared the link on their Facebook page to encourage residents to respond to the online consultation.

Cllr Hunt added that the costs of a by election should be emphasised should East and West Wards are merged into a single Blaenavon Ward.

Cllr Matthews explained that within the second phase response, the draft points raised in the first phase have been expanded upon. This outlines the Council's opposition to the member elector ratio. It also alludes to the Wales wide perspective and how Blaenavon would be hugely different to other Councils across Wales.

There would be limited community benefits in a reduction in Cllr numbers, if any. There would be no financial savings and a cost to the democratic health of Blaenavon residents. It limits the Town Councils ambitions, expertise, and scrutiny and increases workload for the remaining Cllrs.

It will potentially have an impact on diversity and inclusion within local politics and effect community leadership. This is at odds with TCBC's Community and Wellbeing Strategy which calls for an increase in community leadership by 2027.

If East and West wards were to merge into a single Blaenavon ward, the cost implications for an election could total between £15 - £20k.

A detailed discussion took place amongst members around elections and costs together with the option to use polling cards which are not mandatory.

Members further discussed the member elector ratio, the reduction in member numbers from twelve to ten and the merging of Blaenavon East and West wards into a single Blaenavon Ward.



It was proposed by Cllr Matthews to approve the phase two response to the Community Review and for the Chief Officer to make the submission to TCBC via email and copy in the following individuals namely.

- Caroline Genever-Jones, Elections & Business Manager, TCBC.
- Cllr Nathan Yowell, Chair, Task & Finish Group, TCBC.
- Cllr Anthony Hunt, Leader, TCBC.
- Cllrs Janet Jones & Nick Horler.
- Lynne Neagle, MS, and
- Nick Thomas-Symonds, M.P.

This was seconded by Cllr Hunt.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Community Review response approved by members. Chief Officer to make the Community Review Submission to TCBC.

Cllr Matthews proposed to contact the Free Press and South Wales Argus newspapers to communicate the council's concerns regarding the Community review.

This was seconded by Cllr Wheeler.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Chief Officer to contact the press office of the South Wales Argus and Pontypool Free Press newspapers.

Cllr Matthews proposed to invite ward Cllrs Janet Jones and Nick Horler to the February 2024 Full Council meeting to discuss concerns relating to the community review.

This was seconded by Cllr Parfitt.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Chief Officer to invite ward Cllrs to February 2024 Full Council meeting.

#### **7. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding the vacancy within the Blaenavon West ward.**

The Chief Officer provided an update to the members, informing them that the advertisement for the vacancy had been rescinded and readvertised.

The reason for this action was due to an error in the initial vacancy post, which incorrectly advertised the position as being in the West ward. The cut off point is the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2024.

An update will be provided following this date.

**Resolved:** Members noted update.



**8. To receive an update and make any relevant determinations regarding the Town Council's planned concert at the Workmen's Hall on the 14th of June 2024.**

The Assistant Chief Officer Kerry Jones provided members with an overview together with a timescale of emails in relation to securing a booking at the Workmen's Hall for the proposed Town Council concert planned for the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2024.

It was explained that a provisional booking was made in December 2023 with Handshake Ltd for an artist to perform for the Town Council concert at the Workmen's Hall (WMH) on June the 14<sup>th</sup> 2024.

An enquiry was sent by email to the WMH on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2024. There was a considerable delay before receiving a response from Sharon Ford on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2024.

Sharon explained that they had received an inquiry for a wedding in June 2024 but did not have a confirmed date. Therefore, she could not confirm the Town Council booking until after a meeting with the wedding party. This was scheduled for the week commencing the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2024. Kerry explained that she requested an update as soon as practicable following the meeting.

A further email was sent to the WMH requesting an update on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2024

A response was received from Sharon Ford to say that a provisional booking had been made for the Town Council concert, but a booking form needed to be completed. This would then be put before members at the next Board meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2024 for discussion.

The booking form was received from Sharon Ford on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2024. The form was completed and returned the same day together with a request for an update as soon as possible following the board meeting. This would enable the Town Council to plan the concert.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2024, Kerry received an email from Handshake Ltd explaining that the Town Council's provisional booking for the artist was no longer available.

Kerry further explained that on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2024, an email was sent to Handshake Ltd apologising that the Town Council were unable to confirm the booking due to the delayed response from the WMH.

An inquiry was made for availability of the artist later in the year, unfortunately there was no availability until July 2025.

Since returning the booking form to Sharon Ford for the board meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2024 there has been no further updates provided by the WMH.

Cllr Hunt, who is a board member of the WMH was asked by Kerry if all bookings were made in this way, as previously the Town Council has never completed a booking form for events held at the WMH.



Furthermore, Cllr Hunt was asked if the Food Summit event scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2024 and the Community Tourism hack scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 had completed booking forms or were discussed at board meetings to confirm their bookings.

Cllr Hunt could not answer the question and was not aware of a change of booking process.

Cllr Hunt was asked if he attended the board meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2024 and what was the outcome as no update had been received regarding the Town Council booking.

Cllr Hunt stated that he believed the meeting may have been cancelled and could not remember attending.

Cllr Hunt offered to make enquiries with Sharon Ford. As noted by the Chief Officer, this would be of no consequence as the Town Council has lost the booking due to the delay.

The Chief Officer enquired if booking forms had been completed for the previous Town Council Christmas market event held at the WMH. Kerry confirmed that a booking form had not been used.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles that the Chief Officer email Sharon Ford and request an update on the booking process for events at the Workmen's Hall.

This was seconded by Cllr Matthews.

All members in agreement.

Cllr Wheeler proposed that Sharon Ford is invited to a meeting at Town Council to discuss the booking process if necessary. This was seconded by Cllr Matthews.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Chief Officer to email Sharon Ford and request an update on the booking process for events at the Workmen's Hall and if necessary, Sharon Ford is invited to a meeting at Town Council to discuss the booking process.

### **9. To receive a TCBC update from Cllr Liam Cowles (Ward Member for Blaenavon)**

Cllr Cowles provided members with the following update.

Cllr Cowles met with Cllr Jo Gauden and Dave Leach to discuss the Ken Jones statue. The statue will be moved to the Heritage Centre grounds. This will be funded by TCBC.

Following a trip incident involving an elderly resident, Cllr Cowles has arranged for barriers to be placed around the Ken Jones plinth in Broad Street. This is a temporary safety measure until the plinth is removed.

Renovation works at the Market Tavern and the old butcher's shop are ongoing. Cllr Cowles suggested that once the works are completed, the Town Council should highlight the



substantial sum of money they contributed to the project. This could be done through the Town Council's social media platforms, informing residents of the investment made by the Town Council.

Cllr Hunt requested information on the downstairs space of the Market Tavern and the intended use. Cllr Cowles offered to make inquiries and provide members with an update.

There are no additional updates available for the place making plans in Blaenavon following on from the information provided by Rebecca Hartley to the members.

Cllr Cowles gave an overview of the scrutiny panels with which he is involved.

### **Education**

The Education Overview & Scrutiny Committee's recent meeting focused on pupil attendance and exclusions. The key points from the discussion were that attendance rates in Torfaen are lower than pre-pandemic levels. The report emphasised that Torfaen is prioritising efforts to address this issue.

The Welsh Government has eased formal attendance target requirements for schools. The Local Authority (LA) has encouraged schools to establish informal attendance targets for their own evaluation and improvement purposes.

Over the past year, the LA has implemented policy changes, such as fixed penalty notices and the "Not In, Miss Out" campaign, aimed at improving attendance and reducing persistent absenteeism. Additionally, termly attendance forums have been introduced to facilitate the sharing of effective practices, and a revised attendance strategy has been implemented.

In the past year, there has been an improvement in attendance in both primary and secondary schools in Torfaen. However, there has been an increase in exclusions in Torfaen schools since the onset of the pandemic.

To address this, Torfaen has implemented changes to the pupil referral unit protocol, making it easier for more learners to access specialised behaviour provision and support.

Additionally, a fair access panel and managed move policy have been developed to ensure fair placements for hard-to-place learners and is committed to support teachers.

### **Prosperous Overview Committee**

Torfaen Business Direct was launched in March 2023 as a single point of contact for businesses in Torfaen. Its aim is to simplify access to services and support for local businesses. It performed well in its first year with 370+ businesses reached.

The service has faced some challenges with limited resources and capacity and the changing needs of businesses.

A number of strengths have been identified such as its innovative and collaborative model, digital first customer strategy and the wellbeing objectives, data driven and evidence-based



practice and its continuous development and improvement. Its strategic fit and alignment, which supports the delivery of the Torfaen County Plan.

There has been challenges to the service. The limited resources and capacity of the service. Funding for staff through the Shared Prosperity Fund which will end in March 2025.

### **Licensing Committee.**

There are two elements to the licensing Committee.

#### **1. General Licensing Committee the functions that sit under General Licensing are:**

- Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Licensing.
- Scrap Metal.
- Charity Collections (House to House & B Street collections)
- Street Trading.
- Smoke Free Legislation.
- Animal Establishment licensing.
- Sex Establishment licensing.

#### **2. Statutory Licensing Committee the work and functions that fall under the committee concern those that fall under the following:**

- The Licensing Act 2003.
- The Gambling Act 2005.

Members that are interested in any statistics in relation to these areas, the reports are public and readily accessible online.

### **Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority.**

Cllr Cowles serves as the sole representative from Torfaen. He attends meetings of the full National Park and serves as a Deputy Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Cllr Cowles remains actively involved in addressing constituents' requests and handling matters that come to his attention. He encourages residents with Torfaen-related issues to directly contact him, requesting members to forward any concerns or inquiries to him.

Cllr Cowles asked for any questions on his update.

The Chief Officer expressed concerns about the community review recommendations, deeming them fatally flawed.

Cllr Cowles was asked for his response to the shortcomings of the election staff of Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) and what did he proposed to address these issues, particularly the lack of acceptance of recommendations from Town & Community Councils.

As a ward member, he suggested raising these concerns with the leader of TCBC.



Cllr Cowles explained that he was concerned by what he perceives as a predetermined approach regarding member numbers and a lack of responsiveness to consultation responses.

He expressed dissatisfaction with the flawed process which did not lend itself to any debate.

Cllr Cowles is willing to put forward recommendations and assist as needed. He highlighted Blaenavon Town Council's detailed response and anticipates a more successful second-stage consultation.

Cllr Cowles intends to discuss his concerns with Cllr Anthony Hunt, aligning with comments made by the Chief Officer.

**Resolved:** Members noted the update.

**10. To discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding the forthcoming D - Day 80 commemorations on the 6th of June 2024.**

The D – Day 80 link was sent to all members prior to the meeting by the Chief Officer who provided members with the following update.

Dave Williams from the Heritage Railway who presented to members in November 2023 had explained to the Chief Officer that he was no longer able to form part of the event committee due to a conflict of interest in him running the Heritage railway café.

Due to the fact that there has been no contact from the Heritage railway, the Chief Officer requested from David the contact details of the person who needs to be contacted to get the process started. Potentially there is scope to run an event in partnership with the Heritage railway.

A discussion took place amongst members with regards to holding events to commemorate D - Day 80. This included a civic event at the cenotaph on the day (Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024) and a community event, possibly in partnership with the Heritage railway on the weekend following the D - Day anniversary.

Members discussed the lighting of beacons and locations including the Ironworks and whether any other celebrations are known to be taking place in the town.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews that a working group be established to discuss potential locations and partners for collaboration on an event, and to provide recommendations to members.

This was seconded by Cllr Cowles.

All members in agreement.

A further discussion took place between members regarding the working group. Cllrs Matthews, Hunt, and Wheeler agreed to be part of the working group.

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



All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** D - Day event working group established with the following Cllrs appointed, namely Cllrs Matthews, Hunt, and Wheeler.

**11. To discuss and make a determination regarding potential Town Council projects for allocation into the Project Action Plan 2024/25. Relevant updates or new projects as notified.**

- Heritage Easter Egg Trail 2024 – Sophie Johnson
- Chill Skills Project – Sophie Johnson

Sophie explained to members that the Chill Skills Project will be presented at a later date as details were not received in time for the meeting.

**Heritage Easter Egg Trail 2024**

Following the success of last year's project, it is planned to run another trail through the town. This will incorporate different buildings including St Peter's Church and the Heritage Centre.

In line with last year, there will be a digital trail through the town. Participants will scan QR codes at each destination which will show images and clues with a heritage theme leading on to the next QR code and clue.

At each destination, a digital egg is collected, when all eggs are collected a certificate will be awarded which can be shown to claim an Easter egg prize.

The destinations will be places / buildings of historical importance within the town, focusing on Broad Street.

A digital artist from Heads 4 Arts will be commissioned to create the digital element of the project. As some of the work for the trail was undertaken in 2023 the cost this year will be reduced.

There is potential for match funding in partnership working with Tim Monkton, TCBC.

The trail will run throughout the Easter holidays. After this time, the Easter element of the trail will be removed, and it will continue as a Heritage trail.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Parfitt and seconded by Cllr Hunt to approve the project.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Project authorised.



Meeting ended at 19.37 hrs.

Chairman Signed: *Beavan*

Date: 13/3/24.





BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL  
*CYNGOR TREF BLAENAFON*

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**Blaenavon Town Council**

**Finance Update**

**February 2024**



# BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL



## Bank Reconciliation 2023 - 2024

### Bank Reconciliation

FEB

#### Opening Balance

Current Account	£105,406.48
Card	£0.00
Cash in Hand	£4.73
	<hr/>
	<b>£105,411.21</b>

Add Receipts in Period	£810.00
Less Payments in Period	£10,841.08
	<hr/>

Balance at End of Period **£95,380.13**

#### Balances at Bank

Current Account	£95,375.40
Card	£0.00
Cash in Hand	£4.73
	<hr/>
	<b>£95,380.13</b>

Clerk

Sign

*K. Waver*

Date

1/3/24

Chairman

Sign

*J. Beaman*

Date

13.3.24

# BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL

## Income & Expenditure Statement 2023 - 2024



Period

FEB

	ACTUAL		BUDGET		VAR
<b>INCOME</b>					
BTC	£ -		£ -		£0.00
PRECEPT	£ -		£ -		£0.00
VAT RECEIPTS	£ -		£ -		£0.00
REVENUE	£ -		£ -		£0.00
HBO	£ -		£ -		£0.00
COMMUNITY BREW INCOME	£ -		£ -		£0.00
OTHER RECEIPTS	£ 810.00		£ -		£810.00
	<b>£ 810.00</b>		<b>£ -</b>		<b>£810.00</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
SALARY	£ 8,265.26		£ 8,265.26		£0.00
ELECTION COSTS	£ -		£ -		£0.00
ESTABLISHMENT COSTS	£ 1,696.13		£ 1,696.13		£0.00
COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCE	£ -		£ -		£0.00
HOSPITALITY	£ -		£ -		£0.00
PROJECTS	£ 787.18		£ 787.18		£0.00
GRANTS	£ -		£ -		£0.00
COMMUNITYBREW	£ -		£ -		£0.00
VAT	£ 92.51		£ 92.51		£0.00
	<b>£ 10,841.08</b>		<b>£ 10,841.07</b>		<b>£0.00</b>

CLERK

SIGN

DATE

K. Ingham

11/3/24

CHAIRMAN

SIGN

DATE

A. Beavan

13.3.24











DATE

11/3/24

DATE

13.3.24






Ε

**CLERK**  
**SIGN** K. *Kouker*  
**DATE** 11/3/24

**CHAIRMAN**  
**SIGN** *Johnson*  
**DATE** 13.3.24





