



16th January 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 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 24th of January 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. To receive a presentation from Susie Sorby (**Helping Working Families Officer- Bronafon Housing**) regarding the implementation of family food bags within Blaenavon.
5. To receive a presentation from Rebecca Hartley (**Team Leader Strategic Projects TCBC**) regarding the implementation of the Blaenavon Placemaking Plan.
6. **Mayor's Announcements:** To receive the mayor's announcements.
7. **Council Meeting:** To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 22nd of November 2023.
8. **Council Meeting:** To confirm the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on the 6th of December 2023.
9. **Chief Officer's Update:** To receive the Chief Officer's update.

10. To receive Cllr updates regarding recent attendance at outside bodies committee meetings, together with any relevant community / partnership engagement.
11. To receive an update from Sophie Johnson - Community Development and Wellbeing Officer (**December 2023 & January 2024**)
12. To receive and note the Council Tax Base figure for Blaenavon 2024/25 together with the precept timeline requirements for submission to TCBC.
13. To ratify the Town Council Budget and Precept for 2024/25.
14. To consider, discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding the implementation of a salary review working group relating to the role of the Assistant Chief Officer (**Cllr Jones**)
15. To discuss, review and make any relevant determinations regarding the Tidy Butt Project 2023/24.
16. To discuss and make a determination for setting a fixed monthly Town Council litter picking date.
17. To discuss and make a determination to make an application to receive the new official portrait of His Majesty the King.
18. 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.
 - Community Wellbeing Day - Sophie Johnson.
19. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding planning applications.
 - TBRA/23/P/0765/FUL
 - SPRI/23/P/0759/HH
 - MMCA/23/P/0798/FUL
 - MMCA/24/P/0008/TCA
 - SPRI/23/P/0694/FUL
 - SPRI/23/P/0797/VAR
 - TBRA/24/P/0009/OUT
 - RMCA/23/P/0802/FUL
20. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding donation requests.
 - Louise Jones - Williams - Llantarnam Grange.
 - Amy Foster - On behalf of Joseph Foster.
21. To receive, discuss and make any relevant determinations concerning items relating to correspondence.
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 24th of January 2024 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 February 2024**.

In attendance:

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

Officers: Kevin Warren (Chief Officer), Sophie Johnson (Community Wellbeing Development Officer) Kerry Jones (Assistant Chief Officer).

Visitors: Suzy Sorby, Helping Working Families Officer - Bron Afon Housing.

Rebecca Hartley, Team Leader Strategic Projects, - TCBC.

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 Evans – Work commitment.
- Cllr Porter – Union Meeting.
- Cllr Hunt – Unwell.
- Cllr James – Childcare.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Apologies accepted.

3. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Matthews – Personal – item 20

Resolved: Declarations of interest noted by members.

7. Council Meeting: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 22nd of November 2023.

The minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Minutes approved as a true and accurate record.

8. Council Meeting: To confirm the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on the 6th of December 2023.

The minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Minutes approved as a true and accurate record.

12. To receive and note the Council Tax Base figure for Blaenavon 2024/25 together with the precept timeline requirements for submission to TCBC.

The Chief Officer forwarded the information to members prior to the meeting.

The Council Tax Base figure has been set at 1,975 for Blaenavon.

The submission date for the receipt of precept requirement is the 2nd of February 2024.

Resolved. Members noted the update.

13. To ratify the Town Council Budget and Precept for 2024/25.

The Chief Officer forwarded the Town Council's Budget and Precept for 2024/25 together with the agreed amendments to members prior to the meeting.

The proposed budget for 2024/2025 was considered at the Town Council Finance meeting on the 10th of January 2024.

Members accepted the draft budget for 2024/25 and determined a precept increase to £194,250.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Wheeler to formally ratify the draft budget for 2024/25.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Budget for 2024/25 ratified and precept to increase to £194,250.

Cllr Matthews proposed that the Chief Officer forward the submission to TCBC within the timescale. This was seconded by Cllr Jones.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to forward precept submission to TCBC.

14. To consider, discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding the implementation of a salary review working group relating to the role of the Assistant Chief Officer (Cllr Jones)

Cllr Jones explained to members the requirement to conduct a salary review for the Assistant Chief Officer. The role has changed significantly in both responsibility and range of duties since the point of recruitment.

Cllr Jones requested that Cllrs Beavan and Wheeler assist him to form a working group to undertake a job evaluation and salary review of the Assistant Chief Officer role and make recommendations accordingly.

Cllrs Beavan and Wheeler agreed to form a working group with Cllr Jones.

Cllr Jones agreed to arrange a meeting with the Assistant Chief Officer and working group to discuss the review and report back to members for a final determination.

Cllr Jones proposed a working group be set up to review the salary and role of the Assistant Chief Officer. This was seconded by Cllr Beavan.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Working group to be set up to evaluate the role and salary of the Assistant Chief Officer.

16. To discuss and make a determination for setting a fixed monthly Town Council litter picking date.

Cllr Beavan presented to members a series of options in relation to set days for future litter picking sessions.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones that litter picking sessions are set to be conducted the third Sunday of each month, commencing Sunday the 18th of February 2024.

Members further discussed February's litter picking session. It was proposed by Cllr Beavan and seconded by Cllr Cowles to conduct a litter pick at Hayman's field and surrounding areas, meeting at Broad Street carpark at 10am.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Litter picking session to be carried out the third Sunday of each calendar month.

17. To discuss and make a determination to make an application to receive the new official portrait of His Majesty the King.

The Chief Officer had forwarded information and a link to view the portrait to members ahead of the meeting.

The U. K Government have announced that Town and Community Councils can make an application to receive, free of charge a framed portrait of the King.

The Chief Officer informed members there are currently two signed photographs of the former Queen and Prince Phillip, from 1963 in The Workmen's Hall, which are the property of Blaenavon Town Council. It was suggested for them to be retrieved from The Hall and that all three photographs be hung in council chamber.

Cllr Matthews proposed to make a formal application for a copy of the King's portrait. This was seconded by Cllr Jones.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to apply for a copy of the King's portrait on behalf of Blaenavon Town Council.

18. 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.

One project was submitted to members by Sophie Johnson for their perusal in advance of the meeting. Sophie provided an overview to members.

- Community Wellbeing Day

Due to the success of last year's event, it is planned to hold another Community Well Being Day on Saturday 11th May 2024 from 11am - 3pm.

The plan is to gather several community organisations to offer help and support to residents, in health & well-being, financial, housing, cost of living crisis etc Ensuring that residents are aware of all that is available to them in Blaenavon.

Local community groups will also be invited to attend and promote their activities.

We will be providing a fun, family element to the day with story and craft sessions in the library, face painting, a magician, fitness and mindfulness sessions and a voucher to use in the café for lunch to those who attend.

The day could be used as an opportunity to distribute recipe books, cost of living crisis leaflets, information on what the Council provides and to gain invaluable feedback from the community through conversations and engagement.

By holding the event later in the year, with the milder weather, we will be able to run various outdoor activities and involve more partner organisations and local groups by utilising the outdoor space.

The day would provide an ideal opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Town Council, by creating a display celebrating this, for the community to view.

TCBC's Economy and Enterprise, CELT+ and Multiply teams have expressed an interest in providing funding for the event, which would offset costings.

A brief discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllr Cowles to support the project.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Project authorised.

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, there were seven and they were presented as follows.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** 2 new dwellings and associated work.
- **LOCATION:** Lyndene, Llanover Road, Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Porch extension.
- **LOCATION:** 17 Ael Y Bryn, Blaenavon

Resolve: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Proposed holiday let building and associated works in residential garden.
- **LOCATION:** Llewetrog, Middle Coedcae Road, Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Fell 5 trees, fell part of 2 tree groups and coppice 3 trees (Alder and Rowan)
- **LOCATION:** Blaenavon Ironworks, North Street, Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Build new holiday let and detached garage in garden.
- **LOCATION:** Wahroonga, Llanover Road, Blaenavon.

Resolved: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Variation of Condition 1 of application 22/P/0789/FUL
- **LOCATION:** Solitec Engineering Ltd, 8 Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate, Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Outline application for the erection of up to 10 dwellings, plus parking and amenity space.
- **LOCATION:** Land Adjacent to Rifle Street, Blaenavon.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the outline planning application.

Material concerns were raised over the design and close proximity to the protected industrial heritage landscape. It is a sensitive area which is believed to be outside the local development area for Blaenavon.

Members would like to see more details of the design and to ensure any development is in keeping with the World Heritage Site.

Cllr Cowles informed members that he had requested at this early stage a site meeting with TCBC, Highways department. He extended an invite to members should a site meeting take place. He will keep members updated of any development.

The Chief Officer added that under the revised planning laws, Town and Community Councils can attend any site meetings as they are a statutory consultee and are duty bound to attend if required.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews to submit representation to TCBC noting that the design guide for the World Heritage Site be adhered to. This was seconded by Cllr Cowles.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Cllr Matthews to submit representation to TCBC Planning Department on behalf of Blaenavon Town Council.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** The erection of a new minor structure to house new ventilation fans for the Big Pit and associated works.
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit (Blaenafon) Trust Ltd, Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate, Blaenavon

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 request, namely:

- **Louise Jones - Williams - Llantarnam Grange.**

Louise requested financial assistance of £250 from the Town Council to support the running of activities on a free basis. They continually fundraise from a variety of sources including Trusts, Foundations, the Arts Council of Wales, Torfaen County Borough Council and local Community Councils.

Costs for activities include paying freelance artists fees or covering staff to deliver the workshops, art materials as well as overheads of running the spaces for activities.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Beavan to that a donation of £250 be authorised.

All members in agreement.

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

- **Amy Foster - On behalf of Joseph Foster.**

The funding request was to support Joseph aged 14 years on a scientific field trip. Joseph has a great interest in biology and in particular conserving our environment.

Joseph will be travelling to Honduras in 2025 for two weeks taking part in Operation Wallacea to assist the scientists based in the cloud forests of Cusuco National Park with their incredibly important research into the conservation of this crucial site of biodiversity.

He is very keen to understand the destructive impacts on our environment and is planning a sponsored litter pick (8 hours) to help protect the immediate environment, whilst raising funds to help pay for travel, accommodation, and food in Honduras.

Joseph is hoping that the time spent in Honduras will not only assist the conservation of that site but enable him to raise awareness at home of how the destruction of this area would impact us here, in Blaenavon and put conservation practices learnt into practice here.

As a World Heritage Site, conserving Blaenavon, is of particular importance, as without conservation, sites of heritage simply become memories.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Beavan and seconded by Cllr Parfitt that a donation of £250 be authorised.

All members in agreement.

Cllr Matthews abstained as per his personal declaration of interest.

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

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

None received.

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

None presented.

Meeting ended at 20.14 hrs.



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24th of January 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: Cllr. N. Matthews (In the Chair) A. Beavan, M. Wheeler, I. Parfitt, L. Cowles, A. Jones, S. Keen (online).

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

Visitors: Suzy Sorby, Helping Working Families Officer - Bronafon Housing.
Rebecca Hartley, Team Leader Strategic Projects - TCBC.

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 Evans – Work commitment.
- Cllr Porter – Union Meeting.
- Cllr Hunt – Unwell.
- Cllr James – Childcare.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Apologies accepted.

3. Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Matthews – Personal – item 20

Resolved: Declarations of interest noted by members.

4. To receive a presentation from Suzy Sorby (Helping Working Families Officer- Bronafon Housing) regarding the implementation of family food bags within Blaenavon.

Suzy provided members with an overview of the Helping Working Families project and gave a presentation which was displayed via the projector.

The project is based in Bronafon and funded by the Big Lottery.

The initiative is designed to help working families living in Torfaen with a child / children under 18 years of age and at least one family member in employment who are experiencing in-work poverty.

The project operates by following a five-step process.

- Community consultation – every 3 months.
- Analysing data – looking at trends, barriers, concerns, and priorities.
- Volunteer planning – work on ideas based on the needs of the community.
- Project, event, activity – launch project.
- Evaluation – through case studies.

The consultation process highlighted that one issue for working families is the stigma attached to accessing support especially food bank provisions. From this process, family grab bags were launched.

The project piloted last summer for an initial four-week period. Free tickets were booked online via Event Bright. The bags consisted of various ingredients to make meals for a family of four at a cost on average of below £6.

Due to the success of the project and the lengthy waiting list it was agreed to add an additional two weeks to the trial. During the six-week period, eighty families across Torfaen were reached. This highlighted that several residents were travelling from Blaenavon to Cwmbran to collect the bags.

A further trial took place in October 2023 with the implementation of Halloween treat bags followed by seven-weeks of family grab bags from November 1st – December 13th, 2023.

It was noted that residents from Blaenavon were travelling to Cwmbran to collect the bags. During week three, Bronafon housing officers based in Blaenavon advised Suzy to contact Blaenavon Town Council which commenced the partnership working initiative.

From week four any uncollected bags were redirected to the Town Council and distributed from the Council offices.

In December 2023, Blaenavon residents were included in the provision of Christmas hampers with ten families from Blaenavon receiving a hamper. This clearly demonstrated the need for the provision in Blaenavon. 151 residents across Torfaen were reached over the winter period.

A pilot initiative for family grab bags is planned for February, April, and May half terms and the six-week summer holiday period in partnership with Blaenavon Town Council.

A discussion took place amongst members and a series of questions were raised.

How many volunteers are involved, when does the funding end and what is required from Blaenavon Town Council?

Suzy explained that there are 13+ volunteers that regularly help with the project and that these numbers are growing. The funding for this project is due to expire in December 2024.

The support required at present from the Council would be Sophie's links to the community and time. This may include collection of the bags and their distribution from the Council chambers, and to advertise and promote the project.

Members thanked Suzy for a highly informative presentation.

Resolved: Members noted the presentation.

5. To receive a presentation from Rebecca Hartley (Team Leader Strategic Projects TCBC) regarding the implementation of the Blaenavon Placemaking Plan

Rebecca provided members with a presentation regarding the implementation of the Blaenavon Placemaking Plan and provided the following update.

The investment plans for Blaenavon have now been approved and will include a host of projects over the next ten years in the following four main intervention areas.

- Southern entrance to Blaenavon - Prince Street, Commercial Street, Broad Street & Ivor Street.
- Town Centre - Broad Street, Market Street & Ivor Street
- Northwest Entrance to Blaenavon - Broad Street, Lion Street, Boot Lane & The Ironworks.
- Blaenavon House.

TCBC are in the process of developing a delivery plan which will run alongside the Place Plan.

Funding has been secured from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) supplied by the UK Government to help work on design proposals for one of the intervention areas, enabling them to submit schemes for planning permission and develop cost estimates.

This will enable a scheme to be ready should capital funding become available for regeneration. These plans must be completed by the end of this budget year.

Area one, the southern entrance into town has been identified by TCBC as possibly being the first area to prioritise. The goal is to enhance visibility and create a more inviting entrance to the town centre, encouraging more people to visit.

This was demonstrated in an artist's impression with the use of artwork, signage, and improvements to the highway.

Rebecca requested members views on prioritising the Prince Street area and for any questions.

Members discussed the need for signposting into the town centre from attractions such as the Heritage Centre, Big Pit and the Ironworks, the ongoing works at the Market Tavern, 24 Broad Steet and the former betting shop. Members asked what funding streams would be available for the schemes.

Members further discussed if the entrance to the town centre should be the priority. It was suggested that there are other areas within the town centre that also need attention due to potential negative impacts on visitors including Market Street / Square.

These locations have recently been used by the Town Council for events with plans to hold monthly Artisan markets in partnership with the Economic Regeneration Team throughout the year.

Rebecca hoped that with a new vibrant entrance to the town, it would increase footfall, encourage new businesses, and support existing business within Blaenavon. It was suggested that Market Street area may be an option for the second intervention. Funding was confirmed as largely being from the Welsh Government.

It was further explained that design and costings will be worked on, and looked at in greater detail in readiness to move forward should funding become available. Rebecca will update members at a future date.

Members thanked Rebecca for the update.

Resolved: Members noted the presentation.

6. 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.

24/11/2023 - Attended the Blaenavon Town Council Christmas Light Switch on Event at Market Street Car Park.

1/12/2023 - Met with Emma Davies McIntosh to discuss agenda setting for the Healthy Blaenavon Strategic Partnership Meeting.

1/12/2023 - Attended the Blaenavon Male Voice Choir Annual Concert at Blaenavon Workmen's Hall.

3/12/2023 - Attended the Town Council litter pick at Forge Side.

6/12/2023 - Chaired an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council.

7/12/2023 - Chaired the Healthy Blaenavon Strategic Partnership Board.

8/12/2023 - Met with Angela Lewis of the Blaenavon Over 50s Forum.

17/12/2023 - Attended and gave a reading at the Christmas Candlelit Carol Service at St Peter's Church.

20/12/2023 - Attended 2024/25 Budget Setting Meeting at the Chamber with officers and Cllrs Jones and Cowles.

21/12/2023 - Attended Blaenavon Heritage VC Primary School to hand out certificates for the winners of the Torfaen Play Christmas Card Competition.

9/1/2024 - Attended a meeting with Lydia Parry (Bronafon Community Housing), Amy Evans (TCBC) and Katherine Mitchell (TCBC) concerning the Healthy Blaenavon Strategic Partnership.

11/1/2024 - Chaired the Healthy Blaenavon Strategic Partnership Board.

18/1/2024 - Attended Abersychan Comprehensive School to view the Tidy Butt Mental Health and Wellbeing sessions.

23/1/2024 - Attended the One Voice Wales Gwent Valleys Area Committee Meeting.

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

Resolved: Members noted update.

7. Council Meeting: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 22nd of November 2023.

The minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Minutes approved as a true and accurate record.

8. Council Meeting: To confirm the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on the 6th of December 2023.

The minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

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

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Minutes approved as a true and accurate record.

9. Chief Officer's Update: To receive the Chief Officer's update.

The Chief Officer provided members with the following update:

Item 10 within the minutes as per the instructions from members, on the 24/11/23 the Chief Officer forwarded the Town Council's response to RWE regarding the Abertillery Wind Farm consultation and received confirmation that it has been received.

Item 11 within the minutes as per the instructions from members, the Chief Officer completed the letter to TCBC which was shown on the projector screen and will be forwarded to members for their information.

Item 20 within the minutes as per the instructions from members, the Chief Officer transacted £250 to the Over 50s forum and received a reply from Angela Lewis confirming receipt.

In relation to the requests from Front Row Foods and Avondale Residents, the Chief Officer has written to both parties and outlined the Council's rationale for not awarding the requested grants.

On the 7/12/23 together with the mayor, attended the Healthy Blaenavon Strategic Partnership Group meeting in the Council chambers.

On the 20/12/23 together with the mayor, Cllrs Cowles and Jones attended the budget setting working group meeting in the Council chambers.

On the 9/1/24 attended a meeting in the chambers with the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Beavan to discuss the budget in preparation for the Finance Meeting.

On the 10/1/24 attended a meeting in the Council chamber with the Tim Monkton, TCBC who is the foundational economy project officer. A positive meeting in relation to potential grant funding for the Council during the year, especially in relation to events that take place within the town.

On the 16/1/24 together with Sophie, attended a teams meeting with Natasha from Heads 4 Arts in relation to the planning for the forthcoming easter egg trail. We are waiting for some revised costings regarding the project, and these will be presented to members when received.

On the 17/1/24 attended a teams meeting with Julie Jones the project manager for the newly established OVW cost of living crisis team. The Chief Officer provided an overview of the projects and initiatives that the Council are delivering.

As a result, OVW will be sending their project team to film some of our projects starting off with the Film Club in February 2023. The projects will then be shared across Wales and at the OVW conference in July 2024

On the 23/1/24 together with Sophie, attended a meeting in the Council chamber with Lisa Baulch and Sam Kemp from TCBC's newly established Torfaen Food Summit.

The Council's work was outlined together with a discussion regarding their project which is in the planning stage at the moment. A full outline of their work will be available shortly and the Chief Officer will ask them to attend a council meeting to provide members with an overview.

On the 24/1/24 attended a meeting with Tracey Coombe who is the Adult Employability Projects Delivery Manager from the Torfaen Employability Team, together with Kevin Weaver to discuss the Torfaen Works / Celt plus programme of events during the next couple of months.

It was an extremely positive meeting, and it was recognised the outstanding partnership working that is currently being adopted between Blaenavon Town Council and Torfaen works in supporting the community of Blaenavon.

On the 30/1/24, the Council chamber will be used to facilitate a Business Clinic by TCBC to offer advice to aspiring local businesses. This will operate between 9:30am and 2:30p with all of the slots now filled. The cost of use for the chamber is £90 and another example of partnership working to support the community.

The majority of the Chief Officer's time since the last meeting has been finalising the 2024/25 budget which members have now received and will be discussed at item 13 within the agenda.

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

Resolved: Members noted update.

10. To receive Cllr updates regarding recent attendance at outside bodies committee meetings, together with any relevant community / partnership engagement.

Mic Morris Trust

Cllr Wheeler updated members that on the 6th of December 2023 he attended the Mic Morris Trust meeting where nine awards were given to young sports men and women.

The trusteeship has now been expanded to include representatives to all Town and Community Councils in Torfaen. Members were informed that the leader of TCBC, Anthony Hunt is now a trustee member.

Cllr Wheeler also informed members that Jo Lloyd, from TVA had approached him regarding setting up a community transport unit in Blaenavon. Cllr Wheeler has agreed to assist with a feasibility study. Further updates will be provided when made available to him.

RWE Consultation

Cllrs Beavan, Cowles, Parfitt, and Evans attended the RWE consultation meeting. Cllrs Janet Jones, Nick Horler and Linda Clarkson (Abersychan) were also in attendance.

Cllr Beavan and Cowles provided members with the following update.

Community grant funding opportunities were discussed during the meeting. £180k per year maybe available and divided among geographical areas affected by the wind farm such as Blaenavon, Abersychan and Blaenau Gwent.

Any funding received can be used for one off events. Uncertainty about how the funds will be distributed among the areas, whether based on population or another criterion. A panel will be established to administer the funding. TVA was mentioned, and Kathryn, who oversees community benefit packages for wind farms in the area, will scrutinise the process.

It is anticipated there will be lots of challenges moving forward, such as geographical areas, which include Blaenavon, Abersychan and Blaenau Gwent.

The project, if approved, is not expected to start until after the next election in 2027 and therefore, Cllrs felt that the meeting was held prematurely, due to the project's expected start date.

Healthy Blaenavon Strategic Partnership

Cllr Matthews provided members with an update in relation to the Healthy Blaenavon Strategic Partnership Board and explained that in the meeting, it was agreed by those present

that the board and its work, in its current form, was not effective in that there was limited participation by some partners.

It was also agreed to focus on more strategic than operational matters and to meet quarterly instead of monthly. Partnership engagement may take place between meetings on operational matters as individual arrangements between partners.

One Voice Wales Gwent Valleys Area Committee

Cllr Matthews informed members that he had attended the One Voice Wales Gwent Valleys Area Committee meeting. Members were provided with the following update.

- A presentation was received from Chief Superintendent Carl Williams into the policing structure of Gwent Police, including emergency response, neighbourhood policing and community engagement activities.
- It was noted the importance of engaging with the newly appointed One Voice Wales cost of living team.
- Upcoming award nominations should be submitted by the 16th of February 2024.
- TCBC Community Council Charter will be presented to councils in the near future.
- There is only one Gwent Valleys Committee representative on the National Executive Committee of One Voice Wales. Unable to find volunteers for a second. Councils to be asked if anyone is willing to volunteer.
- Concerns were raised over poor attendance at the Gwent Area Committee meetings.

Resolved: Members noted the updates.

11. To receive an update from Sophie Johnson - Community Development and Wellbeing Officer (December 2023 & January 2024)

Members were provided with the following update.

Attended a meeting with Bron Afon housing officers and Suzy from Helping Working Families project to discuss ways of working together to offer more support to families in Bron Afon.

Following on from the meeting, a trial of the family grab bags took place over a three-week period, culminating in the Christmas hampers. These were very well received and appreciated by working families in Blaenavon.

Launched Christmas Lights competitions for both residents and businesses, a good number of entries for both categories was received.

Hospice of the Valleys won first place, receiving a voucher for The Lion. Blaenavon

Cheddar Company placed second, receiving a voucher for Front Row Foods at the Heritage Café, and Shining Stars Academy placed third, receiving a voucher for Heritage Bakes and Cakes.

The residential winners received a voucher for Butterflies Bar and Kitchen (which was kindly donated rather than purchased), a voucher for Green Gables Grazing for second prize and a voucher for the Cake Ladies for third prize.

In partnership with CELT+ Wellbeing Team an 8-week wellbeing course for residents at Blaenavon RFC has been organised. The course covers topics such as healthy eating, better sleep, confidence building, managing stress and anxiety.

Worked with Bethlehem Chapel, Front Row Foods, and Garnsychan Partnership to help identify members of the community who would benefit from their free Christmas dinner delivery project.

Attended the Intergenerational Group Christmas party at Big Pit with children from BHVC and Ysgol Bryn Onnen schools, members of the community, members of a local dementia group and retired Big Pit employees.

Liaised with a local yoga instructor to launch a new class, every Tuesday 6pm -7pm at Blaenavon Active Living Centre. This has now been running for three weeks with fourteen attendees at the first two sessions and nine for the third week.

Positive feedback from the community regarding these sessions has been received. A further session is also being planned for every Monday at Bethlehem Chapel.

Christmas Film Club was extremely well attended, with sixty-five residents. The buffet was supplied by local business, Green Gables Grazing.

Continue to attend various groups and activities to engage with and support residents where possible, signposting to other organisations and individuals who can also offer support.

Worked with Communities for Work+ to help facilitate new drop in sessions at the Heritage Centre every other Thursday 12:30pm - 2:30pm. Residents will be offered help and support on employment, financial difficulties together with physical and mental wellbeing.

Attended meetings with Torfaen Sports Development regarding the delivery of sessions. Including, ensuring the continuation of Wednesday's Over 60s exercise group.

Worked alongside partners on the new action plan for the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Learning and Engagement Working Group

Assisted pupils from BHVC school and TCBCs Litter Prevention Officer, to create and distribute anti-litter posters throughout the town.

Attended the Over 50s Forum with the Chief Officer.

This February half term activities will include a Cook Stars session at Bethlehem Chapel and a swimming session, with potential to run a craft session in partnership with Bronafon.

Attended meetings with the swim manager for Torfaen Leisure Trust to discuss the future of the free pool hire and the possibility of having to pay for future swim sessions. There are currently two free sessions remaining. The town council will need to pay a pool hire charge of £80 per session if free sessions are not available.

Attended meetings with various partners from TCBC Inspire, BRC, Food for Growth, Economy and Enterprise, Family Information Service, CELT+, Multiply, Heads 4 Arts, regarding future projects.

Attended the Tidy Butt wellbeing day at Abersychan school with Cllr Matthews and Kerry. The day was a great success, with positive feedback from pupils and teachers.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

12. To receive and note the Council Tax Base figure for Blaenavon 2024 / 25 together with the precept timeline requirements for submission to TCBC.

The Chief Officer forwarded the information to members prior to the meeting.

The Council Tax Base figure has been set at 1,975 for Blaenavon.

The submission date for the receipt of precept requirement is the 2nd of February 2024.

Resolved. Members noted the update.

13. To ratify the Town Council Budget and Precept for 2024/25.

The Chief Officer forwarded the Town Council's Budget and Precept for 2024/25 together with the agreed amendments to members prior to the meeting.

The proposed budget for 2024/2025 was considered at the Town Council Finance meeting on the 10th of January 2024.

Members accepted the draft budget for 2024/25 and determined a precept increase to £194,250.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Wheeler to formally ratify the draft budget for 2024/25.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Budget for 2024/25 ratified and precept to increase to £194,250.

Cllr Matthews proposed that the Chief Officer forward the submission to TCBC within the timescale. This was seconded by Cllr Jones.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to forward precept submission to TCBC.

14. To consider, discuss and make any relevant determinations regarding the implementation of a salary review working group relating to the role of the Assistant Chief Officer (Cllr Jones)

Cllr Jones explained to members the requirement to conduct a salary review for the Assistant Chief Officer. The role has changed significantly in both responsibility and range of duties since the point of recruitment.

Cllr Jones requested that Cllrs Beavan and Wheeler assist him to form a working group to undertake a job evaluation and salary review of the Assistant Chief Officer role and make recommendations accordingly.

Cllrs Beavan and Wheeler agreed to form a working group with Cllr Jones.

Cllr Jones agreed to arrange a meeting with the Assistant Chief Officer and working group to discuss the review and report back to members for a final determination.

Cllr Jones proposed a working group be set up to review the salary and role of the Assistant Chief Officer. This was seconded by Cllr Beavan.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Working group to be set up to evaluate the role and salary of the Assistant Chief Officer.

15. To discuss, review and make any relevant determinations regarding the Tidy Butt Project 2023/24.

The Tidy Butt project was in partnership working with Pontypool Community Council who jointly supported and financed two sessions which were delivered at St. Albans and Abersychan Comprehensive schools.

Cllr Matthews, together with the Assistant Chief Officer and Community Development Wellbeing Officer attended Abersychan school and were present on two of the five workshops delivered to year eight students.

Cllr Matthews informed members that it had been interesting to see the sessions taking place and to witness the participation from students who enjoyed the workshops very much.

Feedback from teachers on the day was very complimentary of the scheme.

The only downside, was that the Tidy Butt facilitators were not aware of who was funding the workshops possibly as a result of mis communication. Also, that the notification to attend came at short notice.

Sophie confirmed that there had been a breakdown in communication between Tidy Butt administration support and the team that delivered the project on the day.

Sophie is awaiting feedback from the school which will include number of students reached through the workshops on the day and will update members when received.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

16. To discuss and make a determination for setting a fixed monthly Town Council litter picking date.

Cllr Beavan presented to members a series of options in relation to set days for future litter picking sessions.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Jones that litter picking sessions are set to be conducted the third Sunday of each month, commencing Sunday the 18th of February 2024.

Members further discussed February's litter picking session. It was proposed by Cllr Beavan and seconded by Cllr Cowles to conduct a litter pick at Hayman's field and surrounding areas, meeting at Broad Street carpark at 10am.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Litter picking session to be conducted the third Sunday of each calendar month with the first litter pick taking place on the 18th of February 2024 at Hayman's field.

17. To discuss and make a determination to make an application to receive the new official portrait of His Majesty the King.

The Chief Officer had forwarded information and a link to view the portrait to members ahead of the meeting.

The U.K. Government have announced that Town and Community Councils can make an application to receive, free of charge a framed portrait of the King.

The Chief Officer informed members there are currently two signed photographs of the former Queen and Prince Phillip, from 1963 in The Workmen's Hall, which are the property

of Blaenavon Town Council. It was suggested for them to be retrieved from the Hall and that all three photographs be hung in council chamber.

Cllr Matthews proposed to make a formal application for a copy of the King's portrait. This was seconded by Cllr Jones.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Chief Officer to apply for a copy of the King's portrait on behalf of Blaenavon Town Council.

18. 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.

One project was submitted to members by Sophie Johnson for their perusal in advance of the meeting. Sophie provided an overview to members.

- Community Wellbeing Day

Due to the success of last year's event, it is planned to hold another Community Well Being Day on Saturday the 11th of May 2024 between 11am and 3pm.

The plan is to gather several community organisations to offer help and support to Residents relating to health & well-being, financial, housing and cost of living matters. This would ensure that residents are aware of all that is available to them in Blaenavon.

Local community groups will also be invited to attend and promote their activities.

The Council will be providing a fun, family element to the day with story and craft sessions in the library, face painting, a magician, fitness and mindfulness sessions and a voucher to use in the café for lunch to those who attend.

The day could be used as an opportunity to distribute recipe books, cost of living crisis leaflets, information on what the Council provides and to gain invaluable feedback from the community through conversations and engagement.

By holding the event later in the year, with the milder weather, the Council will be able to run various outdoor activities and involve more partner organisations and local groups by using the outdoor space.

The day would provide an ideal opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Town Council, by creating a display celebrating this, for the community to view.

TCBC's Economy and Enterprise, CELT+ and Multiply teams have expressed an interest in providing funding for the event, which would offset costings.

A brief discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews and seconded by Cllr Cowles to support the project.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Project authorised.

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, there were eight and they were presented as follows.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** two new dwellings and associated work.
- **LOCATION:** Lyndene, Llanover Road, Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Porch extension.
- **LOCATION:** 17 Ael Y Bryn, Blaenavon

Resolve: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Proposed holiday let building and associated works in residential garden.
- **LOCATION:** Llewetrog, Middle Coedcae Road, Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Fell five trees, fell part of two tree groups and coppice three trees (Alder and Rowan)
- **LOCATION:** Blaenavon Ironworks, North Street, Blaenavon

Resolved: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Build new holiday let and detached garage in garden.
- **LOCATION:** Wahroonga, Llanover Road, Blaenavon.

Resolved: No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Variation of Condition 1 of application 22/P/0789/FUL
- **LOCATION: LOCATION:** Solitec Engineering Ltd, 8 Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate, Blaenavon

Resolved. No objections from members.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** Outline application for the erection of up to ten dwellings, plus parking and amenity space.
- **LOCATION:** Land Adjacent to Rifle Street, Blaenavon.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the outline planning application.

Material concerns were raised over the design and close proximity to the protected industrial heritage landscape. It is a sensitive area which is believed to be outside the local development area for Blaenavon.

Members would like to see more details of the design and to ensure any development is in keeping with the World Heritage Site.

Cllr Cowles informed members that he had requested at this early stage, a site meeting with TCBC, Highways department. He extended an invite to members should a site meeting take place. He will keep members updated of any development.

The Chief Officer added that under the revised planning laws, Town and Community Councils can attend any site meetings as they are a statutory consultee and are duty bound to attend if required.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews to submit representation to TCBC noting that the design guide for the World Heritage Site be adhered to. This was seconded by Cllr Cowles.

All members in agreement.

Resolved: Cllr Matthews to submit representation to TCBC Planning Department on behalf of Blaenavon Town Council.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** The erection of a new minor structure to house new ventilation fans for the Big Pit and associated works.
- **LOCATION:** Big Pit (Blaenafon) Trust Ltd, Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate, Blaenavon

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 following donation requests namely:

- **Louise Jones - Williams - Llantarnam Grange.**

Louise requested financial assistance of £250 from the Town Council to support the running of activities on a free basis. They continually fundraise from a variety of sources including

Trusts, Foundations, the Arts Council of Wales, Torfaen County Borough Council, and local Community Councils.

Costs for activities include paying freelance artists fees or covering staff to deliver the workshops, art materials as well as overheads of running the spaces for activities.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles and seconded by Cllr Beavan to that a donation of £250 be authorised.

All members in agreement.

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

- **Amy Foster - On behalf of Joseph Foster.**

The funding request was to support Joseph aged 14 years on a scientific field trip. Joseph has a great interest in biology and in particular conserving our environment.

Joseph will be travelling to Honduras in 2025 for two weeks taking part in Operation Wallacea to assist the scientists based in the cloud forests of Cusuco National Park with their incredibly important research into the conservation of this crucial site of biodiversity.

He is very keen to understand the destructive impacts on our environment and is planning a sponsored litter pick (8 hours) to help protect the immediate environment, whilst raising funds to help pay for travel, accommodation, and food in Honduras.

Joseph is hoping that the time spent in Honduras will not only assist the conservation of that site but enable him to raise awareness at home of how the destruction of this area would impact us here, in Blaenavon and put conservation practices learnt into practice here.

As a World Heritage Site, conserving Blaenavon, is of particular importance, as without conservation, sites of heritage simply become memories.

A discussion took place amongst members.

It was proposed by Cllr Beavan and seconded by Cllr Parfitt that a donation of £250 be authorised.

All members in agreement.

Cllr Matthews abstained as per his personal declaration of interest.

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

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

None received.

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

None presented.

Meeting ended at 20.14 hrs.

Signed Chairman: *W. Matthews*

Date: 28/2/24.

