



**20th 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 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 28th 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. To receive a policing update from Inspector Lee Stachow (**Gwent Police Geographical Inspector for Torfaen**)
5. To receive a presentation from Suzy Sorby (**Helping Working Families Officer-Bronafon Housing**) regarding the Chill Skills initiative.
6. To discuss and make a determination regarding the Chill Skills initiative.
7. **Mayor's Announcements:** To receive the mayor's announcements.
8. **Council Meeting:** To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 24th of January 2024.
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 (**February 2024**)
12. To receive, note and discuss Blaenavon Town Council's submissions to the One Voice Wales National Innovative Awards Conference on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2024.
13. To discuss and make a determination regarding the use of polling cards for Blaenavon Town Council's Councillor Elections April 2024.
14. To discuss and make any relevant determinations concerning Blaenavon House (The former Beeches Nursing Home)
15. To discuss and make any relevant determinations in making a donation to the chosen charity of Blaenavon Santa, for their participation in the Town Council Xmas lights switch on.
16. To discuss and make a determination to hold the Town Council's Annual General meeting ahead of the Town Council Finance Meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2024.
17. 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.
18. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding planning applications.
  - SPRI/24/P/0089/FUL
19. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding donation requests.
  - David Millard – Pontypool H.S. Pigeon Club (**Situated at Phillips Street Allotments**)
20. To receive, discuss and make any relevant determinations concerning items relating to correspondence.
21. Other Matters (**At the discretion of the Chairman**)

Yours Faithfully.



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





**BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING**  
**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 28th 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:** Cllr. N. Matthews (In the Chair) A. Beavan, I. Parfitt, L. Cowles, A. Jones, L. Evans, J. Hunt, S. Keen (online).

Cllr Porter – Arrived late.

**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.

Inspector Lee Stachow, Gwent Police.

**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 Harris – Work commitment.
- Cllr Wheeler – Holiday

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

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Apologies accepted.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Hunt – Personal – Item 14.

**Resolved:** Declarations of interest noted by members.

### **4. To receive a policing update from Inspector Lee Stachow (Gwent Police Geographical Inspector for Torfaen).**

Inspector Lee Stachow provided an update on policing matters in Blaenavon, reporting 152 crimes in the last three months, not considered excessive.

Antisocial behaviour in problematic areas like the Resource Centre, Bethlehem Court, and The Hwb was highlighted, with a focus on reducing incidents at the Resource Centre. There have been thirty-eight referrals for ASB in Blaenavon over the same period.

Updates on antisocial behaviour will be provided at the next Town Council meeting. Monthly community team surgeries aim to provide intervention and support.

Operation Harley addresses off-road biking, a partnership initiative between Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, and Gwent Police.

Collaboration with neighbouring boroughs involves pooling finances to address off-road issues, utilising drones and training resulting in the seizure of sixteen vehicles in the past two months.

Pontypool has a newly appointed ward manager who will work closely with Blaenavon's ward manager.

Members raised concerns about cannabis factories in empty properties, Inspector Stachow clarified that it is not an issue in Torfaen. Empty properties are monitored and visited by officers.

The Chief Officer inquired about the new neighbourhood Sergeant; details are pending as the post closed recently. Also, an update on the High Street affray incident in November 2023 will be forwarded to the Chief Officer by Inspector Stachow.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Stachow for his policing update. Inspector Stachow then left the meeting.

**Resolved:** Members noted the update.

### **5. To receive a presentation from Suzy Sorby (Helping Working Families Officer- Bronafon Housing) regarding the Chill Skills initiative.**

Suzy provided members with an overview of the Chill Skills initiative.



Helping Working Families has teamed up with Happy Kids Wales to offer therapeutic skills for children aged 4 to 17 years old. Andrea, the facilitator from Happy Kids Wales specialises in providing emotional well-being support within this age range.

With a significant rise in mental health issues among children and young people, Andrea has devised child-friendly methods to deliver mental health support, helping them identify emotions and cope effectively.

The courses, structured to provide coping strategies, include Happy Kids for 4-6-year-olds, Chilled Skills for 7-11-year-olds, and Chill & Chat for 12-17-year-olds. While the 4-6-year-olds and teen sessions have been piloted previously, the 7-11-year-olds' course is new.

Suzy aims to extend these sessions to the North of the Borough. The proposal suggests fully funding the Chilled Skills course (7-14 years) for 1-hour sessions once a week over 6 weeks in Blaenavon.

The approach incorporates play, craft, and imagination. The goal is for participants to acquire coping skills and tools by the end of the course, benefiting both children and parents.

Each 6-week course costs £700 to deliver. To ensure wider coverage across the borough, Helping Working Families proposes partnership working with Blaenavon Town Council for 50% funding for the other two programs in Blaenavon.

Andrea has availability for Monday afternoons/evenings starting from April 1st, which allows for the first session to start promptly.

Suzy informed members that a decision to support further courses could be made after the first 6-week course has concluded, should they wish to go ahead.

Members asked a series of questions in relation to the programmes which Suzy addressed:

Previously, courses have been conducted at community halls, but there is a desire to link with schools to provide local families with easier access to the sessions. However, it is noted that schools might not be suitable for the teen sessions.

For this age group, working away from the school environment has been proven to be more effective, as school-related issues can often be linked to their struggles.

To qualify for the fully funded course, at least one member of the family needs to be employed, in line with Helping Working Families' criteria. If members opt to support additional courses, six out of the twelve families involved will need at least one employed person.

Members are welcome to attend the sessions, with the recommendation that the same member attend consistently for continuity.



The Chairman thanked Suzy for her update. Suzy then left the meeting.

**Resolved:** Members noted the presentation.

**6. To discuss and make a determination regarding the Chill Skills initiative.**

A discussion took place amongst members on potentially partnering with Helping Working Families for the Chill Skills initiative. They considered partially funding one or two courses and covering fifty percent of costs. Additionally, they discussed postponing a decision until after the first course concludes.

Cllr Cowles proposed deferring the decision-making process until the conclusion of the first course. This was seconded by Cllr Jones.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Project funding decision deferred.

**7. 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.

February 5<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> along with the Chief Officer met with Angela Lewis of the Blaenavon Over 50's Forum.

February 5<sup>th</sup> attended the Introduction to Community Engagement Training with One Voice Wales.

February 18<sup>th</sup> attended the monthly Town Council Litter pick with fellow Cllrs and officers.

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

**Resolved:** Members noted the update.

**8. Council Meeting: To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2024.**

The minutes were read for accuracy with no amendments.

It was proposed by Cllr Beavan and seconded by Cllr Keen 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 13 within the minutes as per the instructions from members, on the 25/1/24 the Chief Officer forwarded the Town Council's precept for 2024/25 to TCBC with confirmation that it has been received.

Item 17 within the minutes as per the instructions from members. The Chief Officer has ordered a copy of the King's portrait from the UK government and received confirmation that it will be delivered within the next few weeks.

Item 20 within the minutes as per the instructions from members the Chief Officer transacted £250 to Llantarnam Grange and received confirmation that it has been received and to offer thanks to the Town Council for the generous donation.

£250 has also been transacted to Amy Foster and confirmation that this has been received and a huge thank you to the Council for their support for Joseph.

On the 2/2/24 together with the Sophie, attended a meeting in the Council chambers with Emma Goode who is the OVW cost of living project co-ordinator.

The meeting consisted of an overview of the Council's service delivery covering the past 12 months. The Town Council have now been selected to provide evidence to the cost of living project with Emma attending the next film club date which is the 29/3/24.

On the 6/2/24 together with Sophie, attended a meeting in the Council chamber with Tim Monkton TCBC who is the foundational economy project officer and Kat Fox - Madely from Torfaen small business markets regarding the Blaenavon Artisan Market which is commencing on the 16/3/24.

This has now been advertised on our FB page and a press release within the Argus. Feedback to date has been excellent. The market is being facilitated using the Town Council's Street Trading Permit.

On the 7/2/24 the Chief Officer attended a team's meeting with Lyndon Puddy TCBC and Lisa McMail Clerk at Pontypool Community Council regarding the contract relating to CCTV cameras. Mr Puddy will be attending the March 2024 full council meeting to provide members with an overview regarding the current position relating to funding.

On the 20/2/24 the Chief Officer attended a meeting in the Council chamber with the Tim Monkton TCBC who is the foundational economy project officer.

Tim has now confirmed that he will be supporting the Council in relation to several of their events during 2024 and there will be a grant of £5k. Another good example of partnership working to deliver services to the community.



On the 22/2/24 the Chief Officer together with Kerry, attended a OVW training course namely module 17 Making Effective grant applications. Very worthwhile input which puts into perspective how Town and Community Councils can apply for funding to support projects. The Council will be making applications moving forward to enhance our capacity and capability.

On the 23/2/24 the Chief Officer attended a meeting in the Council chamber with the Deputy Mayor Cllr Beavan to provide an update regarding recent Council business in particular the OVW National Awards submissions and forthcoming election notices.

On the 26/2/24 the Chief Officer attended a meeting in the Council chamber with Cllr Parfitt and Kerry regarding early discussions in relation to a mural project for the Town. One of the considerations discussed was the Castle Hotel.

On the 27/2/24 the Chief Officer attended a meeting in the Council chamber with Sophie and Tim Monkton TCBC who is the foundational economy project officer. This was to discuss the final arrangements regarding the Artisan Market. Everything is now in place in terms of event notices, risk assessments and landlord's consent.

On the 28/2/24 the Chief Officer attended a meeting in the Council chamber with Claire Rees from TCBC licensing regarding a review of the Council's Street Trading permit. Everything is compliant and the permit will be renewed in June 2024.

On the 28/2/24 the Chief Officer attended a meeting in the Council chamber with Cllr Parfitt and Stephen Bull from the Castle Hotel regarding a potential project relating to a mural to be painted on the Castle Public House building. Cllr Parfitt will submit a project proposal upon his return from leave in May 2024.

The Chief Officer explained to members that the majority of his time since the last meeting has been the compilation and submission of applications to the OVW National and Innovative Practice awards 2024. This will be discussed further at 12 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.

Cllr Beavan enquired if the new Artisan and Craft markets would be advertised at Big Pit, Iron Works, and the school.

Sophie confirmed that the school will share the poster. Cllr Beavan also expressed an interest in joining the Community Events Working Group. This will be discussed at the next Finance meeting.

**Resolved:** Members noted the update.



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

Cllr Evans provided an update, informing members that he had contacted Lyndon Puddy regarding the Gwent Public Service Board, and confirmed that there are currently no scheduled meetings.

Cllr Evans shared that there has been no contact from Susan Driscoll, Churches Working Together Group.

Cllr Matthews inquired about updates on school and governor meetings from Cllr Porter. Cllr Porter had no updates, that due to work commitments, he had not attended any meetings recently.

**Resolved:** Members noted the updates.

**11. To receive an update from Sophie Johnson - Community Development and Wellbeing Officer (February 2024)**

Sophie provided members with the following update.

- Attended One Voice Wales online seminar on self-guided trails to help with the planning and implementation of the planned Easter Heritage trail and future opportunities.
- Ran the first Befriending Film Club of the year at end of January 2024.
- Worked alongside Chief Officer and Assistant Chief Officer to collate and submit project entries for the One Voice Wales awards.
- Attended Food Summit working group meetings to liaise with partners regarding the event and support.
- Attended a meeting with Emma Goode from One Voice Wales regarding the Council's work in relation to the cost-of-living crisis.
- Attended meetings with Tim Monkton and Torfaen Small Business Markets regarding the Artisan Markets being introduced in Blaenavon.
- Attended and supported the Intergenerational Group session at Big Pit with pupils from BHVC school and Ysgol Bryn Onen, plus members of their Dementia friendly group.
- Attended the Play Sufficiency Action Meeting with various partners from across Torfaen, the provision for older children in the borough was discussed.



- Sophie continues to work in partnership with Bron Afon - Helping Working Families Project, during half term ten families collected pancake grab bags from the Council offices. Supported a family craft session at Bethlehem Chapel alongside them during half term.
- Other half term activities included a Cook Stars session and a community swimming session.
- Attended the Healthy Blaenavon Network meeting with various partners to discuss the work each organisation does in Blaenavon and ways of working together.
- Attended the Food Summit held at the Workmen's Hall, which was organised by Food for Growth Torfaen.
- Ran February 2024 Befriending Film club.
- Held planning meetings with Heads 4 Arts regarding the Easter Heritage Trail and working on content for this.
- Attended meetings with Communities for Work plus officer regarding supporting the creation of a women's group in Blaenavon.
- Attended meetings with TCBC's Multiply team regarding future projects the Council can support with delivery in Blaenavon.
- Planning for the Community Well Being Day on Saturday 11th May 2024

**Resolved:** Members noted the update.

**12. To receive, note and discuss Blaenavon Town Council's submissions to the One Voice Wales National Innovative Awards Conference on the 27th of March 2024.**

The Chief Officer provided members with an update on the submissions to One Voice Wales (OVW) National Innovative Awards 2024.

This is the first award conference since 2019 due to the Covid pandemic.

The Chief Officer explained to members that this is an excellent opportunity to promote, share and receive recognition for the excellent work of Town and Community Councils across Wales.

This year there are twelve categories in total. Each have their own judging panel made up of a cross section of judges including Welsh Government and other key partners. It is an independent process, OVW do not form part of the judging panel.



The deadline for submission was the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2024. Councils who have been shortlisted for an award will be notified in early March 2024.

The Chief Officer on behalf of Blaenavon Town Council had submitted seventeen projects into eight of the twelve categories namely.

- Best Environmental Project - Litter Picking Initiative.
- Best Community Engagement Initiative - Community Wellbeing Day & Befriending Film Club.
- Best Tourism Initiative - A combination of six projects: two Coronation Events, Country & Western Event, Bronwen Concert, Christmas Market & Christmas Lights Switch on.
- Best Youth Engagement - Photography Workshop. Teen Gym and Skateboarding.
- Best Heritage Initiative - Walter Waygood Exhibition & Heritage Easter Trail.
- Best Community Initiative including Cost of Living actions – Family Swimming sessions & Cooking on a Budget.
- Best Democratic Health Initiative – Newsletter.
- The Caerwyn Roberts Best Local Council Service of the Year Award – Walter Waygood Exhibition & Walter Waygood Photography Workshops.

The Chief Officer explained to members that if the Town Council are successful, they will be requested to provide a presentation showcasing the work that has been delivered at the awards conference.

The Chief Officer confirmed that Cllrs Matthews, Wheeler along with Sophie, Kerry and himself would attend the conference to represent the Town Council.

The Chief Officer thanked Cllr Matthews for the help he provided with the submissions.

Members thanked officers for the hard work and effort and regardless of the outcome members and officers should be proud of the Town Councils achievements.

**Resolved.** Members noted the update.

### **13. To discuss and make a determination regarding the use of polling cards for Blaenavon Town Council's Councillor Elections April 2024.**

Cllr Matthews informed members that ten signatures had been received for the by-election for the Blaenavon East Ward. A decision needs to be made whether to distribute polling cards to residents in that area.

The Chief Officer provided an update to members following discussions with Caroline Genevère-Jones, the Elections manager at TCBC, regarding election costings. The following points were discussed:

- The Town Council has budgeted £6,000 for election costs.



- East Ward Polling Cards: Print & Fulfilment: £414 + VAT
- Post and Packaging: £2,016 + VAT

If contested, the estimated costs provided by Caroline Genevere-Jones are between £6,000 to £8,000. In the case of an uncontested election, the estimated cost would be £3,000, plus admin fees from TCBC.

Members had a full discussion regarding the use of polling cards in upcoming elections. Points raised during the discussion included:

- Members noted that polling cards have not been used in a by-election in Blaenavon since 2015, establishing a precedent for their non-use.
- Members expressed concerns about the cost-effectiveness of using polling cards, particularly when previously voter turnout is low (15-20%).

The Chief Officer informed members that he has received clear direction from the Elections Manager, that a decision regarding the use of polling cards must be communicated to the by Thursday the 29<sup>th</sup> of February 2024.

A further discussion took place amongst members regarding the promotion of the election, particularly in distinguishing between East and West wards.

- Concerns were expressed about potential confusion among voters regarding the specific wards involved in the election, emphasising the need for clear communication.
- It was suggested that the Town Council's social media platforms and local Facebook groups could be used for effective promotion and clarity about East and West Wards.
- Members acknowledged that candidates themselves could promote the election information, should the election be contested.

Cllr Cowles proposed that polling cards are not used for the upcoming election, and in the event of a contested election, it is shared on social media platforms.

This was seconded by Cllr Jones.

All members in agreement

**Resolved:** Chief Officer to inform Caroline Genevere-Jones that polling cards are not required for Blaenavon Town Council Councillor elections April 2024.



**14. To discuss and make any relevant determinations concerning Blaenavon House (The former Beeches Nursing Home)**

Cllr Matthews provided members with an update on Blaenavon House, highlighting that residents have raised concerns about the condition and safety of the building.

In 2022, TCBC, in collaboration with the owner, Dr Zammit, Tangible Happiness Ltd, submitted an unsuccessful bid to the Government's Levelling Up Fund, seeking a multi-million-pound investment.

The building is Grade 2 listed and forms part of the World Heritage Site and current plans for the building are unclear.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding the uncertain future of Blaenavon House.

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles to send three letters to Tangible Happiness Ltd, TCBC, and CADW to seek clarification on future plans for Blaenavon House.

This was seconded by Cllr Jones.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Chief Officer to write on behalf of Blaenavon Town Council to Tangible Happiness Ltd, TCBC and CADW.

**15. To discuss and make any relevant determinations in making a donation to the chosen charity of Blaenavon Santa, for their participation in the Town Council Xmas lights switch on.**

Members acknowledged the presence and excellent performance of Blaenavon Santa at the Christmas light switch-on event in 2023.

It was noted in the planning group that Blaenavon Santa could not use collection buckets on the night due to restrictions.

This year, Blaenavon Santa is supporting a local men's mental health group, 'No Man Left Behind' held at Victory Church Blaenavon.

As Blaenavon Santa is not a constituted group, the Town Council is unable to directly pay for their services.

A discussion took place amongst members regarding making a donation to Blaenavon Santa's chosen charity, 'No Man Left Behind'

It was proposed by Cllr Cowles that a donation of £250 be made to the chosen charity. This was seconded by Cllr Beavan.



All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Chief Officer to transact £250 to ‘No Man Left Behind Charity’

**16. To discuss and make a determination to hold the Town Council’s Annual General meeting ahead of the Town Council Finance Meeting on the 8th of May 2024.**

Members discussed the possibility of scheduling the Annual General Meeting (AGM) ahead of the May 2024 Finance meeting. It was noted that, as per Standing Orders, the Finance meeting must start at 6.30pm, requiring a separate summons for each meeting.

A further discussion took place regarding the feasibility of the newly appointed Deputy Mayor chairing the Finance meeting so soon after their appointment.

It was proposed by Cllr Matthews, and seconded by Cllr Cowles, to retain the original meeting time and date of the AGM.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** AGM meeting time and date to remain unchanged.

**17. 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.**

None received.

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

The Chief Officer had forwarded the planning application to members ahead of the meeting, there was one and it presented as follows.

- **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** To raise the first four bays of Unit 9's south elevations from 6m to 10m; complete over cladding and re-roofing of units 8 and 9; alterations to external fenestration and site access and security.
- **LOCATION:** Solitec Engineering Ltd, 8 Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate, Blaenavon.

**Resolved:** No objections from members.

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

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

Members discussed the following donation request namely:



- David Millard – Pontypool H.S Pigeon Club (situated in Phillip Street Allotments)

A brief discussion took place amongst members.

Cllr Cowles proposed that the Chief Officer requests a copy of the pigeon club bank statement and that the donation request be deferred and considered at the next council meeting.

Cllr Jones seconded the proposal.

All members in agreement.

**Resolved:** Donation deferred. Chief Officer to request a copy of the pigeon club bank statement and add to the agenda for the next council meeting.

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

None received.

**21. Other Matters (At the discretion of the Chairman)**

None presented.

Meeting ended at 19.57 hrs.

Signed Chairman: *N. Matthew*

Date: 27/3/24.