



6th April 2021

Dear Councillor.

You are hereby summoned to attend **BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL'S FINANCE MEETING at 6:30 pm on WEDNESDAY 14th APRIL 2021.**

The meeting will be held remotely in accordance with the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020

Any members of the public who also wish to attend on this basis please contact the Clerk so that arrangements may be made for them.

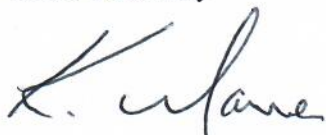
Members of the public have the right to ask questions at Council meetings and to speak in Welsh or English, provided that at least 3 working days' notice in writing of the question has been provided to the Clerk.

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 March 2021.
5. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding the terms of engagement from Mr Andy Smith (Community Finance Solutions) relating to the Internal Audit for the 2020/21 Financial Year.
6. To receive, discuss and note a letter from Adrian Crompton (Auditor General for Wales) dated the 26th March 2021 outlining an amendment to the previously published audit arrangements for 2020/21.
7. To receive, discuss and note a letter from Deryck Evans (Audit Wales) dated the 31st of March 2021 outlining the Audit Notice for 2020/21 in particular Electors Rights and Information required for Audit.

8. To receive the latest update from Cllr Gareth Davies regarding the Participatory Budget Project.
9. To consider and note an update regarding the received Co-option Applications for the vacant position of Blaenavon Town Councillor.
10. To discuss and make a determination regarding the forthcoming vacancy for the position of Town Council Administrator.
11. To discuss and make a determination regarding new road signs to improve road safety and protect animals in particular Hedgehogs along the approach roads in and out of Blaenavon (**Cllr Huybs**)
12. To discuss potential Town Council projects for allocation into the Project Action Plan 2020/21. Relevant updates or new projects as notified.
13. **Responsible Finance Officer's Update:** To receive the March 2021 financial update together with the year-end accounting statement.

Yours Sincerely



Kevin Warren. MInstLM. FCMI.
Chief Officer.
Blaenavon Town Council.



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL FINANCE MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14th APRIL 2021.

The meeting was held remotely in accordance with the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

In attendance:

Councillor: L. Cowles (In the Chair)

Councillors in attendance: G. Davies, E. Harvey, J. Huybs, A. Jones, N. Horler, J. Skyrme, L. Evans, G. McCann.

Officers: Mr K. Warren (Chief Officer)

The Council Finance meeting was opened at 6:30pm by the Chairman Councillor Liam Cowles who welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

1. To receive any questions from the public.

None received.

2. Apologies

- S. Bright – Work Commitment

Cllr Davies proposed that the apologies be accepted; this was seconded by Cllr Horler.

Resolved: Apologies accepted by members.

3. Declaration of interests

Cllr Davies – This was in relation to item 8 on the agenda namely the Participatory Budget project. Cllr Davies is an employee of TCBC.

4. To confirm the minutes of the Council Finance Meeting held on the 10th of March 2021 as a true and accurate record.

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

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Harvey that the minutes be approved.

Resolved: Minutes accepted as a true record.

5. To receive, discuss and make a determination regarding the terms of engagement from Mr Andy Smith (Community Finance Solutions) relating to the Internal Audit for the 2020/21 Financial Year.

The Chief Officer had forwarded a transcript of the terms of engagement to members prior to the meeting on the 6th of April 2021 explaining the role of the internal auditor.

Cllr Cowles referred to the report and reminded members of its content and the areas that will be tested as part of the 2020/21 audit process.

Cllr Cowles requested if members were happy to make a determination for Community Finance Solutions to conduct the 2020/21 audit based on the terms within the engagement letter?

Cllr Davies highlighted the importance of a robust audit process to ensure that the financial governance and accountability of the Council is kept in good order and referenced the good work that had been delivered in previous years by the Responsible Financial Officer Mr Warren and also the support and guidance by the internal auditor Mr Smith.

Cllr Jones reiterated the comments made by Cllr Davies and was happy to endorse the terms of engagement for 2020/21.

It was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Davies that the terms of engagement for the 2020/21 internal audit be approved for Community Finance Solutions to conduct the internal audit.

Resolved: Community Finance Solutions authorised to conduct the 2020/21 Internal Audit process.

6. To receive, discuss and note a letter from Adrian Crompton (Auditor General for Wales) dated the 26th March 2021 outlining an amendment to the previously published audit arrangements for 2020/21.

Cllr Cowles explained to members that the letter from Mr Crompton had been forwarded to members for their perusal prior to the meeting.

Cllr Cowles provided members a brief summary of the content of the letter which outlined an amendment to the previously published 2020/21 audit arrangements from the Auditor General for Wales and requested if members had any comments or observations regarding the letter in question. There were no comments from members.

The Chief Officer added, and further summarised the comments made by Cllr Cowles, that the reason for the amendment was to give other Councils within the Town and Community

Council sector a further 12 months to submit their audits from 2019/20. It was clarified that there were around 250 Councils across Wales who had not submitted their annual returns from this period.

The Chief Officer explained that Blaenavon Town Council wasn't in that position because our finances are well managed. It was reiterated that the audit arrangement this year will be the same as last year and this will be taking the form of a deep dive audit in any case.

Resolved: Members noted the letter and the rationale for the amendment.

7. To receive, discuss and note a letter from Deryck Evans (Audit Wales) dated the 31st of March 2021 outlining the Audit Notice for 2020/21 in particular Electors Rights and Information required for Audit.

Cllr Cowles explained to members that the letter from Mr Evans had been forwarded to members for their perusal by the Chief Officer prior to the meeting.

Cllr Cowles referred to the letter and reminded members regarding its content and areas for noting which included.

- Elector's Rights
- Annual Return details for 2020/21
- Timetable for Public Inspection of Accounts
- Audit Notice.

Cllr Cowles asked the Chief Officer if they had any comments regarding the letter. The Chief Officer referred to page 5 of the letter and explained to members that Audit Wales have provided Councils with a clear directive in relation to the areas that will be focused upon and this will include variances between audits.

The other areas of note were contracts for the Clerk and salary payslips which will apply to all Councils. The Chief Officer assured members that all of the areas that had been highlighted are in good order and the internal audit would be commencing on the 15th of April 2021 and this will take around two days.

Cllr Cowles explained to members that the Council finances are being managed robustly by the Chief Officer and if members had any comments or observations regarding the letter or forthcoming audit?

There were no questions from members.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

8. To receive the latest update from Cllr Gareth Davies regarding the Participatory Budget Project.

Cllr Davies apologised to members for the delay in receiving the finance from TCBC as the partner contributions have all been paid. Members were told that this was due to the change of

leadership at TCBC. Cllr Davies explained to members that he has passed on his disappointment to TCBC and confirmed that the Chief Officer had also sent TCBC an email regarding the outstanding VocalEyes invoice.

Cllr Davies explained that TCBC have offered a meeting with the Town Council for the 20th April 2021 to further discuss this delay, and this matter has been ongoing for a considerable amount of time. Cllr Davies explained that everything had been agreed and then things changed when Dave Congreve left TCBC.

Cllr Davies further explained that as soon as he had an update then he would inform members but unfortunately the start date of the project will be delayed as the finances have not been authorised and this will not materialise until it had been agreed by the new regime at TCBC.

Cllr Cowles asked members if they had any questions, Cllr Jones requested an update regarding the lack of activity within the VocalEyes platform. Cllr Davies confirmed that the activity had been reduced but this is because he had not promoted the site based on the fact that the finances from TCBC had been delayed.

Cllr Davies further explained that once that money had been confirmed then the site can be promoted, and activity should increase in the knowledge the money is there and can be utilised. Cllr Davies reiterated his disappointment regarding the delay in the finances from TCBC and alluded to the fact that the Torfaen Public Service Board met on the 31st of March 2021 where the project was signed off but, in his view, this was agreed 12 months prior to that.

Cllr Davies stated that when he receives an update, he will inform members accordingly.

Cllr Jones was allowed a further question which was to highlight that the invoice from VocalEyes was still outstanding and this was not a good position for the Town Council to be in.

Cllr Davies explained that he was also unhappy about this as in his view this had already been agreed at the project board level at the Torfaen Public Service Board but because this needed final sign off at TCBC this has been delayed. Once this has been agreed then matters should progress.

Cllr Cowles raised a point that the Chief Officer had sent an email to Rachael O'Shaughnessy earlier that afternoon and from the response she didn't know much about what was going on.

Cllr Davies explained that he has spoken to Ms O'Shaughnessy and this should be sorted during the next few days and he will be pushing Mr Lyndon Puddy to get this matter resolved quickly.

A brief discussion took place regarding the potential damage to the relationship with VocalEyes regarding the invoice not being paid. Cllr Davies clarified that when the finances are authorised then the invoice would be paid immediately but confirmed that the project was not officially signed off by the Public Service Board until the 31st of March 2021.

Cllr Cowles asked if the Chief Officer had any questions. Mr Warren explained that he has a conference call arranged with Susan Rodaway from VocalEyes on the 15th of April 2021 to update her regarding the decisions made during the meeting.

Mr Warren raised a concern that the invoice sent out from VocalEyes was sent out in February 2021 with a payment date namely the 17th of March 2021. Cllr Davies explained that the commitment from Blaenavon Town Council to pay the invoice was in place and the Commitment from TCBC to reimburse the Town Council was also in place and as far as he was concerned these are two separate things.

A discussion took place regarding the payment of the outstanding £7,200. The Town Council has already paid £1,200 as their contribution to the platform costs and Mr Warren explained that the outstanding £6,000 would not be paid until the reimbursement had been received from TCBC.

Cllr Davies explained that the agreement for the invoice was with the Town Council and VocalEyes and not with the Public Service Board / TCBC.

A detailed conversation then took place with members regarding the outstanding £6,000 invoice from Vocal Eyes. A timeline and summary of events on payments was provided by the Chief Officer and members needed to determine based on the information presented whether the £6,000 should be paid now or wait until the finances from TCBC are transferred to the Town Council as part of the project funds. The Chief Officer advised that he was uncomfortable paying the invoice at this time.

Members confirmed that the arranged meeting with TCBC was on the 20th of April 2021 and the consensus was to wait for the meeting to take place before the £6,000 invoice from Vocal Eyes is paid.

This was proposed by Cllr Alan Jones and seconded by Cllr Jayne Skyrme. Members were all in agreement.

Resolved: A decision to pay the £6,000 invoice to VocalEyes will be taken pending the meeting with TCBC on the 20th of April 2021

9. To consider and note an update regarding the received Co-option Applications for the vacant position of Blaenavon Town Councillor

The Chief Officer informed members that the closing date for the expressions of interest for the position of co-opted Cllr closed at 12 midday on the 14th of April 2021.

There had been four expressions of interest received and these were.

- Georgina James
- Marc Harris
- Tristan Griffin
- John Hunt

The expressions of interest have been forwarded to members for their perusal prior to the meeting. The determination will be made by members at the Full Council meeting on the 28th of April 2021 and will follow the same format as in previous co-option processes.

Cllr Huybs raised a point that all of the expressions of interest were of a high standard but noted that in the application submitted by Georgina James she had stated that she no longer lives in Blaenavon which could potentially disqualify her application.

The Chief Officer confirmed that he had also picked up on this and advised that he would clarify this with Ms James regarding her address.

This was proposed by Cllr Harvey and seconded by Cllr Skyrme.

Resolved: Chief Officer to clarify Ms James address ahead of the Full Council meeting.

10. To discuss and make a determination regarding the forthcoming vacancy for the position of Town Council Administrator.

Cllr Cowles updated members that a resignation letter has been received from the Town Council's administrator Lyndsey Harris and referred to the comments made within the letter regarding the positive experience Lyndsey had working for the Town Council.

Cllr Cowles requested if the Chief Officer had a comment to make regarding the vacancy. Mr Warren explained that he was keen to advertise the replacement as soon as possible due to the demands within the Council which demonstrates how much the Council has grown during the past two years.

Mr Warren further explained that the current role was 10 hours per week at salary grade 5 but due to the demands placed on the role he would be requesting authorisation to increase the hours to 15 hours / week covering 3 days.

If authorised, then it was planned to hold interviews at the end of May 2021.

Cllr Huybs concurred that the role has grown and that 15 hours was definitely needed to support the Chief Officer in their role and proposed that the request of 15 hours be authorised. This was seconded by Cllr Harvey.

All members were in agreement that the role to be advertised as 15 hours per week at grade 5 salary scale.

The Chief Officer gave an overview regarding the timeline for the job advert and revised job description. Job advert sites were discussed by members and the Chief Officer which included the use of TCBC and TVA.

It was confirmed that Lyndsey's last working day would be on the 28th of April 2021 and she would not be present at the next Full Council meeting on that date.

A leaving gift was discussed by members regarding what would be suitable as a thank you for the work that Lyndsey had contributed to the Council.

It was discussed that a gift should be purchased from Council resources. This was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Harvey.

Cllr Skyrme to arrange the purchase of the leaving gift.

Resolved: Role of administrator to be increased to 15 hours per week and to advertise for the role. A leaving gift for Lyndsey Harris to be purchased from Town Council resources.

11. To discuss and make a determination regarding new road signs to improve road safety and protect animals in particular Hedgehogs along the approach roads in and out of Blaenavon (Cllr Huybs)

Cllr Huybs explained that a resident had contacted the Council to enquire if it were feasible if the Council could erect road signs in and out of the town to warn motorists about hedgehogs crossing the highway.

Cllr Huybs further explained that at this time of the year a lot of hedgehogs were killed on the roads and after conducting some initial research it was identified that a project was conducted by the UK government regarding the use of free road signs to warn motorists of hedgehogs being on a section of the road.

The local authority would need to make the application for the signs based on evidence that there was a problem at a given location. Cllr Huybs felt that this would not be feasible as the success rate for the applications was extremely low.

As a result, she has completed further research on the British Hedgehog Preservation Society that also produce warning signs that can be placed in private gardens. Cllr Huybs request members if she could receive authorisation to progress this further and report back to members.

A discussion took place amongst members and it was proposed by Cllr Jones and seconded by Cllr Harvey that further investigations to be completed by Cllr Huybs.

All members were in agreement.

Resolved: Cllr Huybs to progress further and report back to members when able.

12. To discuss potential Town Council projects for allocation into the Project Action Plan 2020/21. Relevant updates or new projects as notified.

No projects had been submitted for discussion.

Resolved: Members noted the update.

13. Responsible Finance Officer's Update: To receive March 2021 financial update.

- Credit Card Payments
- Cheque Payments
- Bacs Payments
- Cash Book Transactions
- Bank Reconciliation
- Project Revenue
- Project Expenditure
- Budget
- VAT
- Bank Statements
- End of Year Accounting Statement for 2020/21

Mr Warren (RFO) presented to members each of the above areas of finance and highlighted any relevant information. Members were invited to ask any questions in relation to the areas referenced.

Cllr Davies referred to the carryover of funds and understood the rationale for this, but the Council should be mindful of this level of carryover with a precept of £130,000 and what the public would potentially take from this fact.

Cllr Davies clarified that it has to be demonstrated how much money is being brought into the Council from other income streams which is not attributed to the precept and the spend plans for this.

The Chief Officer gave an explanation regarding the carryover of funds and this was in relation to a reduced spend on projects due to the pandemic and if the spend plans had been followed as per the agreed budget, then the carryover of funds would have been around £40k.

The income stream that has been drawn in from the Healthy Blaenavon Projects have not been spent fully this year and are budgeted for 2021/22. The Council have drawn in £173k and spent £143k.

A discussion then took place regarding informing the public on where the spend has taken place together with an overview how the money is being spent.

It was agreed that a communication report is prepared for the community when the audit has been completed. Cllr Huybs and the Chief Officer to discuss the content of the report.

Members were happy with the presentation.

Resolved: Financial update for March 2021 accepted by members.

Any other Matters.

Cllr Alan Jones updated members that he has now stood down as a Borough Cllr with TCBC due to the lack of support and the volume of work that the role involves.

Members thanked Cllr Jones for all of his hard work, and he will be definitely missed as he is an extremely proactive Cllr in Blaenavon and has been for many years. It was noted that this will be TCBC's loss and definitely Blaenavon Town Council's gain.

It was also noted that it was Cllr Cowles's last meeting as Finance Chairman. The Chief Officer expressed his thanks to Cllr Cowles for the work that he has done during the past 12 months and the style he has adopted in chairing the meetings.

The Chief Officer also expressed his thanks for the support that Cllr Cowles has shown him during a testing year.

Members all expressed their thanks to Cllr Cowles for delivering an excellent contribution to the Council in 2020/21.

The meeting was ended at 19.34.

Chairman Signed:

Date: 13/5/21

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Jones', written over a faint background watermark of the Blaenavon Town Council crest.



BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
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Blaenavon Town Council

Finance Update

March 2021

BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL



Bank Reconciliation 2020 - 21

Bank Reconciliation

MAR

Opening Balance

Current Account	£107,265.87
Cash in Hand	£21.45
	<hr/>
	£107,287.32

Add Receipts in Period	£339.78
Less Payments in Period	£19,964.27
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Balance at End of Period **£87,662.83**

Balances at Bank

Current Account	£87,641.38
Cash in Hand	£21.45
	<hr/>
	£87,662.83

Clerk

Sign K. Lawrence

Date 11/4/21

Chairman

Sign L. J. Coules

Date 15/4/21

BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL

Income & Expenditure Statement 2020/2021



Period

MAR

	ACTUAL	BUDGET	VAR
INCOME			
BTC	£ -	£ -	£0.00
PRECEPT	£ -	£ -	£0.00
VAT RECEIPTS	£ -	£ -	£0.00
REVENUE	£ -	£ -	£0.00
HBO	£ -	£ -	£0.00
COMMUNITY BREW INCOME	£ -	£ -	£0.00
OTHER RECEIPTS	£ 339.78	£ -	£339.78
	£ 339.78	£ -	£339.78

EXPENDITURE

SALARY	£ 5,751.89	£ 5,751.89	£0.00
ELECTION COSTS	£ -	£ -	£0.00
ESTABLISHMENT COSTS	£ 1,142.36	£ 1,142.36	£0.00
COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCE	£ -	£ -	£0.00
HOSPITALITY	£ -	£ -	£0.00
PROJECTS	£ 8,300.00	£ 8,300.00	£0.00
GRANTS	£ 2,250.00	£ 2,250.00	£0.00
COMMUNITY BREW	£ 1,000.00	£ 1,000.00	£0.00
VAT	£ 1,520.02	£ 1,520.02	£0.00
	£ 19,964.27	£ 19,964.27	£0.00

CLERK

SIGN

K. Llaner

DATE

1/4/21.

CHAIRMAN

SIGN

L. J. Coates

DATE

15/4/21

3

CLERK

SIGN

K. Lane

DATE

1/4/21

CHAIRMAN

SIGN

L. J. Croucher

DATE

15/4/21

BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL

Petty Cash transactions 2020/2021



MONTH MAR

DATE	CATEGORY	SUPPLIER	DESCRIPTION	NET	VAT	TOTAL	DATE PAID
				£ -		£ -	

Opening Balance	£ 21.45
Less transactions in Period	£ -
Plus reimbursement in period	£ -
Closing Balance	<u>£ 21.45</u>
Cash in Hand	<u>£ 21.45</u>

<p style="margin: 0;">CLERK SIGN <i>[Signature]</i></p>	<p style="margin: 0;">CHAIRMAN SIGN <i>[Signature]</i></p>
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DATE

1/4/21

DATE

15/4/21

										£ 15.68		

CLERK
 SIGN *R. Lane*
 DATE 1/4/21

CHAIRMAN
 SIGN *L. J. Coates*
 DATE 15/4/21