

NANTYGLO & BLAINA TOWN COUNCIL

CYNGOR TREF NANT-Y-GLO A BLAENAU

Mrs T Hughes - Town Clerk/RFO

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Minutes of the Planning & Highways Committee Meeting held via a hybrid meeting at 5:30pm on Tuesday 9th May 2023 at the Council Chamber, Blaina Institute, High Street, Blaina.

A meeting to which members of the public were invited to attend.

Present: Councillor K Jones JP, presiding, Chair, Planning & Highways Committee
Councillors: G Morvan, D Hillman, L Harris & K Jenkins, C Hillman, L King & M Williams.

In attendance: Mrs T Hughes - Town Clerk
Mr W Evans – Manager, Blaenau Gwent Foodbank

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Town Clerk informed that there were no members of the public in attendance. **Resolved** to note the information received.

Declaration of Interest

Members were invited to declare matters of interest either at the beginning or at any time during the proceedings. Members were reminded that all declarations of interest must be recorded in the book provided.

Resolved to note that no such declarations were received.

To receive: Mr R. Wayne Evans, Blaenau Gwent Foodbank.

Members were reminded to note the Standing Orders relating to guest speakers:

1. Members to receive the presentation.
2. Questions were invited at the end of the presentation.
3. Members were requested to ask only one question each – if time allows AND with permission of the Chair, a second question may be asked.
4. Members were reminded that there was to be no discussion or exchange of points of view between Members and that all dialogue was to be directed through the Chair.

The Chair welcomed Wayne Evans to the meeting and introductions were made. The Chair informed that the Town Council were very interested in and appreciative of the work carried out by Blaenau Gwent Foodbank.

WE: Mr Evans distributed information handouts to all present). BG Foodbank has been in the

area for approximately 35 years. Mr Evans explained that he had previously worked in several branches of Lloyds Bank including Brynmawr branch and that he had retired in 2008 and then joined the first foodbank in Wales that same year.

Covid and the cost of living crisis had made circumstances very difficult for many people. BG Foodbank was part of Blaenau Gwent Community Aid and the Trussell Trust which comprises of 450 centres UK wide. BG Foodbank provides 3 days of nutritionally balanced food for people in crisis and also tries to help people resolve whatever issues they might be experiencing. Prior to Covid there were 6 centres in Blaenau Gwent which has since reduced to 2 with 15 volunteers, although it was planned that new centres were to be opened and BGCBC were to recruit a salaried operational manager. Currently, food etc was for delivery only although it was hoped that collection would soon resume. The Foodbank also has a warehouse courtesy of Continental Teeves, Ebbw Vale.

Referral to BG Foodbank was only via professional agencies such as social workers and health visitors, Tai Calon and Department for Work & Pensions etc, who would be given a voucher for the Foodbank. The Foodbank would then contact the person to determine requirements such as dietary, toiletries, cleaning items and pet food etc.. People who were homeless could be provided with items such as tents, sleeping bags and appropriate foodstuffs. BG Foodbank only provides non-perishable items and always within date (except for items that people could help themselves to). The food is received from local supermarkets including Waitrose in Abergavenny. Donations are also received from schools, churches and business although donations from the public have reduced due to the cost of living crisis. Food was sorted and date checked by volunteers.

BG Foodbank also listens, helps and 'signposts' people to other sources of help and advice as required. It was noted that some people could become too dependent upon the Foodbank and not access the help and support that was needed. Sometimes people abuse the help provided by the Foodbank and are, in some cases, banned for misuse. The Foodbank has a duty of care to those in genuine need and to the people and businesses/organisations who donate to the Foodbank.

During 2022/23, BG Foodbank fed a total of 4,862 people (including 1741 children) but indirect help would increase this figure threefold. 46 tons of food was collected, and 55 tons distributed. 40 active referral agencies, key agencies being Tai Calon, DWP Jobcentres and BG Community hubs. Most common reasons for referral to BG Foodbank was due to low income and benefit delays. BG Foodbank helped 191 families in Nantyglo comprised of 329 adults and 211 children (4860 meals) and 124 families in Blaina comprised of 199 adults and 62 children (2349 meals). In March 2023 BG Foodbank distributed 6.2 tons of food but only 4.3 tons of food was received in donations. The Foodbank was currently experiencing many more people in need and was very grateful to the Town Council for the regular financial donations as it directly helped those in need from Nantyglo & Blaina.

The Chair thanked Mr Evans for an excellent and informative presentation and Questions were invited:

Q: Were many referrals to the Foodbank made by Councillors?

A: Not many, Councillors usually advised and signposted people to other agencies for assistance.

Q: Did BG Foodbank receive any other funding?

- A: Extra funding had been received from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. No direct funding was received from the Welsh Government, but directly from local authorities. There was a working party/forum set up with the Welsh Government. Following a meeting with Jane Hutt of the Welsh Government at which she viewed the operation of the Foodbank, the Welsh Government provided a large financial amount to assist with gas and electricity help for people via vouchers. The Foodbank also provided help via a sim card which provided 6 months of free calls, texts and data to assist people in need with health and job appointments etc.
- Q: Did the Foodbank have any involvement with the local AM & MP?
- A: yes, both Alun Davies AM and Nick Smith MP were very supportive as were other Blaenau Gwent CBC Councillors.
- Q: How was the financial donations made by the Town Council used?
- A: It was used to purchase items not received via donations and were in short supply for people within Nantyglo & Blaina.
- Q: Was any help/assistance received from other town councils within Blaenau Gwent?
- A: Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council assist with another agency and Tredegar Town Council assist in a different way. Some help may have previously been received from Brynmawr Town Council although it was only Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council that provided regular financial assistance.
- Q: How many people were helped with tents etc? St Peter's Church in Blaina operated a warm hub.
- A: Many other places also operated warm hubs. BG Foodbank provided help to many homeless people, and it appeared that many of these were coming to Blaenau Gwent from areas such as Newport and requesting help. A partner agency provided a drop-in centre and issued tents and sleeping bags. Mental health issues including suicide was a big problem within Blaenau Gwent.
- Q: How often could a person access help from the Foodbank?
- A: Usually 3 times within a six-month period but the Foodbank also signposts other types of appropriate help and advice.
- Q: Was BG Foodbank looking to increase the number of centres it operates?
- A: Yes, at the Eden Centre, Aberbeeg and at Castle Street, Tredegar although this was not quite ready so another appropriate location needed to be identified. . The areas most in need of the Foodbank within Blaenau Gwent is from Cwmtillery southwards.
- Q: Was BG Foodbank still recruiting volunteers and was there any restrictions regarding ages of volunteers?
- A: Volunteers were always required, mainly in the warehouse and centres although the recruitment procedure was unknown as this was carried out higher up in the organisation. There was currently no age restriction for volunteers (only during the Covid pandemic) and the organisation lost many of its volunteers since the Covid pandemic.

Mr Evans offered Members the opportunity to visit the Foodbank and requested that they contact the Foodbank in the first instance.

The Chair thanked Mr Evans for his very helpful and informative presentation and stated that the Town Council could be certain that the financial donations made were being made to a safe and worthy organisation.

Mr Wayne Evans left the meeting and Council Chamber at this juncture.

1. Apologies for absence:

Members were invited to consider the apologies for absence and to formally resolve to accept

Resolved to note that apologies were received from Mrs N Horner (Assistant Officer)

Resolved to accept the apologies received.

2. Questions from the public:

To receive any questions from the public regarding matters on the agenda. There was a 10 – minute allocation time for any questions from the public.

No public in attendance and no questions put forward.

Resolved accordingly.

3. Correspondence:

Members were invited to consider the listed correspondence, plus with the Chairman's permission, any additional correspondence received prior to the date of the meeting.

a) Email from Rebecca Ward - Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (for information):

BG & LNP Partnership meeting Wednesday 24th May, 10am to 12pm.

Resolved to note information received.

b) Email from Rhys Rigby – Welsh Government on behalf of PEDW Infrastructure@gov.wales:

DNS Application by Pennant Walters Ltd for Proposed Development: Wind farm of up to 8 turbines and infrastructure.

Resolved to note information received.

4. Planning Applications:

Members were invited to consider any further applications that may be received prior to the date of the meeting:

Additional planning applications received with permission of the Chair:

a) C/2023/0099 – 35 Dale View, Nantyglo:

Single Storey side extension, change of use of land to garden curtilage and fence enclosure.

Resolved that no objections or representations be made.

b) Plan application no. C/2023/0100 – Land adjoining Greenfield Cottages, Golf Road, Winchestown, Nantyglo:

Outline application for 3 no. dwellings with parking provision and vehicle access from Golf Road.

Members commented that plans for housing on this plot of land had been discussed for a number of years but none had been approved to date.

The application appeared to have previously been in respect of four properties which had now been reduced to 3 properties.

Resolved that no objections or representations be made.

5. Licence Applications:

Members were invited to note the application(s) **for information only**:

- a) Applicant: Daniel Newman, 54 Drysiog Street, Briery Hill, Ebbw Vale
Details: Temporary event notice for the sale of alcohol on 15th July 2023 between 2pm and 10pm. Duffryn Park Playing Field and Club, Blaina. (Licensing Act 2003).

Resolved to note the information received.

Meeting declared closed at 6.33pm