

Blaengwrach Community Council

Cyngor Cymuned Blaengwrach

Draft Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on Thursday 15th January 2026 at the Welfare Hall, Heol Y Felin, Cwmgwrach and via Zoom, commencing at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillors R Williams (Chair), P Rudd, J Bulman, R A Williams, M Mortimore, D Jones and A Doherty, A Hipsley. Councillors C Edwards and A Edwards joined the meeting online.

Council Employees Present: Clerk/RFO Linda Evans

Members of the Public Present: Councillor H Davies

127/25 Apologies: None

The meeting started at 6.30 pm, with the Chair welcoming everyone to the meeting. The meeting is held as a multi-hybrid meeting in accordance with The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

128/25 Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest at this meeting.

129/25 County Councillor's Report:

- a) Councillor H Davies commented on the road surface improvements at Heol y Graig, expressing his satisfaction and noting how much better it is. However, she regretted that the work did not cover the entire road up the hill. PR agreed, noting an issue with some stones washing away in the rain. PR also mentioned a complaint that the new surface has led to traffic moving too fast.
- b) A complaint had been received from a resident regarding the brightness of the signage lights at the Fuel Station and KFC, which is private land. It was reported that the signage has become more visible and brighter since trees around the signage were trimmed. Although the trees are the responsibility of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC), a private company was within its rights to trim branches overhanging the KFC car park. Members expressed gratitude to Councillor H. Davies for this information.
- c) A complaint was received regarding internet service from a resident near the Welfare Hall. Councillor H Davies asked if other members living in the vicinity were experiencing similar, "terrible issues." Although this is not a matter the Council can resolve, the question was posed to offer the resident additional information for their problem. All members, including the Clerk, who frequently use the internet in the Hall, confirmed they have not noticed any issues.
- d) A resident contacted Cllr D Jones about a neighbour who is failing to clean up after their dog, providing a video as evidence. Cllr H Davies advised Cllr Jones to instruct the complaining resident to report the incident online. The reporting process was described as clear and simple to follow online. The matter will be referred to a Council Officer for investigation; this officer has the authority to issue fines to individuals who fail to clean up after their dogs. Cllr H Davies offered her assistance but indicated she would require the complainants' details and their permission to submit a report on their behalf. The Clerk will share the online reporting link with all councillors.
- e) Councillor R A Williams raised a question regarding the old railway line, now a public footpath, specifically asking about any plans to fully reopen the path from Cwmgwrach to the viaduct. She highlighted that the unrepaired Langy Bridge currently prevents people from walking that route as they had previously done. Councillor H Davies could not say if there was a way through due to the dual carriageway but was willing to look into the matter.
- f) The following points were discussed regarding potholes in Heol Wenallt, Cllr H Davies informed members that the potholes have been reported to NPTCBC. The work is scheduled for completion by February 7th, though the type of repair (temporary filling or a more permanent "hot box" method, like that used on the bridge) is currently unknown. Cllr R Williams noted that the deterioration is caused by water and weather in the same area and expressed hope that the planned repairs would be effective. Cllr C Edwards highlighted the severity of the potholes, stating they are "really bad" from the school down.
- g) HD reported a fly-tipping incident at the layby (Banana Island) where black bags were discarded near the canal. The immediate action required is to arrange for NPTCBC to remove the bags. Members noted that this is a growing issue and identified other locations experiencing similar problems.

Councillor A Hipsley joined the meeting in person.

130/25 Public Observations on Matters Arising and Agenda Items: None

131/25 To Approve the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on Thursday 20th November 2025:

The Clerk requested a correction to the minutes: an error concerning the previous Clerk's report needed noting. The amount of £412, representing 5 weeks' wages not 4 weeks, is to be included in Finance Report 115/25. With this correction it was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting are a true record.

132/25 Matters Arising from the Ordinary Meeting held on Thursday 20th November 2025

Further to Minute 112/25 Review and Reorganise Wall Displays in the Hall - A decision on what the photograph of the current council will be is undecided for now. The Remembrance painting has been successfully mounted. A date needs to be set for removing the other pictures and a decision for repainting the hall, foyer, toilets, and kitchen area. A discussion on colour options is required. ACTION: The Clerk was

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directed to organise the removal and secure storage of all existing wall photographs. Two options were put forward for the redecoration work: The groundsperson, assisted by the caretaker, could undertake the redecoration. This would be dependent on their availability, capacity to complete the work, and the estimated duration of the task. The council could procure a local painter and decorator for the job. ACTION: The Clerk is tasked with first discussing options with the caretaker and groundsperson regarding the necessary work. Should they be unable to incorporate this into their existing duties, the Clerk will then obtain suitable quotes for the members' consideration and discussion.

133/25 Agenda Items:

- a) To Finalise the 2026/27 Budget and Set Precept for 2026/27 - The Clerk has reviewed the budget, focusing on NET amounts for items where VAT is reclaimable. This review includes a comparison of projected costs based on potential increases of 4.1% and 5%, which is presented for discussion by all members. Given the anticipated rise in revenue from both Cemetery and Hall Hire, the Clerk's suggestion was to keep the Precept at the previous year's level of £80,400. Following a debate on the figures by all Councillors, and after Councillor P Rudd provided a detailed explanation of the Quarter 3 Budget, it was agreed that there should be no percentage reduction to the upcoming year's budget. However, due to unpredictable inflation, particularly concerning heating and electricity costs, the Committee ultimately recommended a 0.5% increase to the Precept, this was proposed and seconded with all councillors agreeing on the Budget and Precept Figure for 2026/27 £80802 a 0.5% increase on 2025/25 Precept of £80400, increase per household of £1.06 a year/ 0.09p a month. RESOLVED Clerk will inform NPTCBC of the Council's decision.

Section 137 Expenditure Limit for 2026/27 - £11.60 per elector (from £11.10 4% increase). Noted and RESOLVED

Councillor H Davies left the meeting.

- b) Storage Arrangements for Regular Hall Users - As part of the Hall repainting project, it was agreed that a significant decluttering is needed. Storage currently located around the Hall should be removed and relocated to the conference room, which is currently underutilised. Additionally, the unsightly padlocks on the kitchen cupboards must be removed, and the practice of using the disabled toilets as a storage facility is not ideal and should be restricted to only the additional tables which are secured. Items that are stored on the Stage will also need to be moved to the conference room. The decision to not charge for storage remains unchanged. It was proposed, seconded, and agreed that all Hall users storing items must declutter, retaining only those items that cannot be removed after each hired session. Users store items at their own risk and are advised to limit the number of items stored, along with any items deemed valuable. RESOLVED the Clerk will inform all users that are currently storing items in the Hall.

For the redecorating, move items to make space and allow access to all areas. Replace the chairs and tables currently in the kitchen with those stored in the conference room. The remaining tables and chairs should be moved to the lock-up, provided there is enough space. RESOLVED

- c) Scribe Quote - The quote for the Scribe service, totalling £1,587, was approved by the Members and has been included in the 2026/27 budget. This cost comprises an initial payment of £747, followed by twelve monthly payments of £70. Clerk will do the necessary agreements and will aim to start using the new systems at the beginning of April 2026. RESOLVED
- d) 2025 Christmas Celebrations - Gary Sage provided an update on the 2026 Christmas Panto, next year's Panto will be *Peter Pan*, and the cost will remain the same as this year. This year's event was considered "the best one ever", however, a discussion took place regarding attendance; a minority of attendees were from the village, but others were not. A suggestion was made to approach the school and have an afternoon performance for the children. Past Christmas activities that had more village children involvement were discussed such as selection boxes and a visit from Santa on a sleigh. It was suggested to hold two showings, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. The council's representative on the School Governing Body, Cllr C Edwards, believed the school would be interested in the offer. RESOLVED The Clerk will investigate whether a panto would be able to be held during school time. Several members expressed dissatisfaction with this year's Christmas lights display. Specific concerns included, The Christmas tree was noticeably lopsided and remained so, with the company making no effort to straighten it. The lights were not synchronised correctly, and some were left on during the daytime, this may have been down to sensors not being cleaned. RESOLVED The Clerk was tasked with forwarding the Members' concerns to the company and requesting a reply.
- e) J & D Water Consultants Risk Assessment - The Clerk gave an update: Meeting with the Caretaker is now scheduled for tomorrow morning (Friday). The new monitoring book has been received. A copy of the Risk

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Assessment has been printed for the Caretaker. Recommendations have been distributed to all council members. Payment has not yet been made as the new invoice has not been received. The cost of Health and Safety (H&S) training also needs to be considered. For further discussion at the next meeting. **RESOLVED**

134/25 Planning: There were no planning applications to discuss at this meeting.

135/25 Crime and Policing

RESOLVED The Local Police Website shows 20 Crimes reported for November 2025 Blaengwrach and Glynneath West location. The paper was noted.

136/25 Finance

1. **RESOLVED** the following payments were scrutinised and approved:

Clerks Report - Monthly P&R 21st November 2025 to 15th January 2026

Payments Made	21/11/2025 - 15/01/2026 (2 Months)	Amounts
Nest	Staff Pension Scheme (8 weeks)	£135.52
Council Employee Wages	(8 weeks)	£5348.13
HMRC	Tax and NI 06/11/25 to 05/01/26	£703.13
NPTCBC	General Rates - Hall	£796.00
NPTCBC	General Rates - Cemetery	£40.00
Welsh Water	Water Rates for Welfare Hall	£381.00
Welsh Water	Water Rates for Cemetery	£64.00
Welsh Water	Water Meter Reading Cemetery	£45.05
Zoom.Com	Online meeting platform x 1 month	£16.79
Utility Warehouse Ltd	Electricity @ Welfare Hall	£489.98
British Gas	Hall Usage	£782.83
EE Ltd.,	Hall Wi-Fi	£86.40
G Sage	Panto	£700.00
Amazon	2 x LED Lights for the Disabled Toilet	£25.97
TG Jones/WHSmith	Printer Paper	£7.99
Royal British Legion	Donation for Wreath	£50.00
Royal British Legion	Deposit monies collected for Poppy Appeal	£16.00
Wales Air Ambulance	Raffle Money	£40.00
Tesco Mobile	Council Phone TopUp	£10.00
Post Office Counters	Postage Stamps	£13.60
Councillor Allowance	x10 2025/26	£1,976.00
	Total Expenditure	<u>£11,728.39</u>
Income Received	21/11/2025 - 15/01/2026 (2 Months)	
SRCC Stores Ltd	Monthly Rental of Shed in the Park	£70.00
TSB Bank	Monthly Interest on "Reserve" Saver	£97.06
NPTCBC	Flying Start - Hall Hire November	£112.00
Celtic Archers	Hall Hire November	£112.00
Empower	Singing for the Brain Hall Hire Nov and Dec	£126.00
Glynneath Judo	Hall Hire October and November	£82.00
Glynneath VIEW	Yoga - Hall Hire November and December	£84.00
Cwmgrach OAP Group	Hall Hire October and November	£224.00
Royal British Legion	Poppy Appeal	£16.00
Wales Air Ambulance	Raffle Money	£40.00
Arts Academy	Hall Hire December	£350.00
NPTCBC	3rd Precept	£26,800.00

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Panto Tickets	Cash and Bac's Payments	£220.00
	Total Income	<u>£28,333.06</u>
Account Balances		
General Account		£2,469.71
Reserve/Saver Account		£57,775.80
	Total Account Balances as at 15/01/2026	
	£	<u>£60,245.51</u>

2. Dwr Cymru Direct Debit for Hall has increased from £170/per month to £190.50/per month. Noted.
3. Cllr M Mortimore thanked the Clerk for her work preparing the budget and precept paperwork.

137/25 Correspondence & Section 137 Request:

1. **Royal British Legion (RBL):** Receipt of a £50 donation for a wreath and £16 for the Poppy Appeal is acknowledged with thanks.
2. **Wales Air Ambulance:** Thank you for the £40 donation received from the Christmas Raffle.
3. **Welsh Government:** Notification has been received regarding the Senedd Cymru (Disqualification) Order 2025 coming into force.
4. **Aberdulais Road Noise:** All councillors have received the summary of advice provided to the Cynon Valley and Taff Non-Statutory Waterways (CSTNW) and Jeremy Miles MS regarding this matter.

138/25 Set Date, Time & Proposed Agenda Items for the next meeting;

The next meeting of the Council will be held on **Thursday 19th February 2026 at 6.30 pm**. Lianne Griffiths (LAC NPTCBC) wishes to present various local community initiatives to the council; Members welcomed her attendance. The Clerk will send an invite for the next meeting. Second item an update on the Scout and Rugby Club Leases.

Notices for the meetings will be posted at least three working days before they are due to take place.

Meeting closed at 7.39 pm