



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE ON FRIDAY 5TH JUNE 2015 AT 2:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Councillors: P. Cook, N. Dix, C. Hawker, K. James, T. Williams

Together with:

Councillor Z. Hammond (Town Councillor), Mr J Hold (Clerk), PS M Thomas (Gwent Police), Mr H Edwards (Blackwood Retail Partnership)

Also:

A. Highway (Town Centre Manager), S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager), P. Hudson (Marketing & Events Manager), A. Jones (Complaints Officer - Clerk)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Mr Highway opened the meeting and asked for nomination for Chair.

Councillor Dix was nominated and seconded. Councillor Dix accepted the position and thanked members for nominating him.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

Councillor Dix asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Councillor Cook was nominated and seconded. Councillor Dix accepted the position on behalf of Councillor Cook as she was running late – this was later confirmed with Cllr Cook when she arrived.

3. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors: D.T. Davies, E. Aldworth, C. Erasmus (Town Councillor), A. Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal & Conservation).

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PREVIOUS MINUTES OF MEETING (20TH MARCH 2015)

The previous minutes were taken as read.

6. STEPS BLACKWOOD GATE RETAIL PARK UPDATE

Mr Highway advised the group that Mr Dallimore passed on his apologies and provided the following update

The work to the steps has mostly been completed. There have been delays with the installation of the handrail and the repainting of lines in the car park, but these should be completed shortly. The litterbin and lighting elements are the final phase of the scheme, which are also due to be installed shortly.

The Chair advised the group that the works are a big improvement to this link to the town centre.

7. BEACH PARTY UPDATE

Mr Hudson informed the group that the 'Beach Party' event has been running for several years and is a unique event for Blackwood.

There are 14 banners throughout the Borough and 35,000 flyers have been printed and distributed around the County Borough and Gwent Valleys area to advertise the event. Flyers were also passed around the group.

Mr Hudson advised that the configuration of the 'Beach Party' has been changed so that the event will be more centrally focused; the 'urban beach' will be outside Tidal Stores. There are 28 stalls, donkey rides, funfair, dance groups and more.

The group were advised that on Facebook last week there were over 5000 views of the promotion for the event. Social media figures are very impressive and 600 people stated that they would be attending the event, with this figure increasing daily.

Footfall figures will increase on the day but Mr Highway advised that the Footfall camera is currently broken. Mr Hudson said they were looking into using temporary footfall counters at the events.

The Chair introduced Mr Edwards to the group and asked him what his thoughts were on the event.

Mr Edwards stated that it will be great for the town and even if visitors don't spend in the shops on that day, it will make them aware of what the town has to offer and attract them back in future.

Councillor James stated that the event is very popular and raises the profile of Blackwood and encourages people to come back.

The Chair asked Mr Hudson if shops have been consulted on the event. Mr Hudson advised that this has been done and the organisers have tried to position the rides outside shops that would be closed on the day.

The Events Team has tried to accommodate everyone and no negative feedback has been received.

Mr Hudson was thanked for his update.

8. RED LION UPDATE

Mr Highway advised that Planning officers have already written to the owner in the past requesting that the site be cleaned up. Tim Stephens (Head of Development Control) has asked if the group would like him to write to the owner again and ask what their intentions for the site are. Members agreed that this was the appropriate next step.

9. TOILET BLOCK UPDATE

Mr Highway conveyed an updated from Mr Dallimore who advised that a comprehensive programme is needed and that officers are monitoring the site.

As this building is privately owned the Council cannot do anything other than tidying the area periodically with the owner's consent.

The Chair advised that only if the building was structurally unsafe could we serve a Section 215 notice on the owner.

10. CLEANING OF ARTWORK

Mr Highway advised that the artwork does need cleaning and some of this work can be undertaken by NCS but the balustrade will need special treatment. The artist has been contacted and he has confirmed that he will be undertaking the cleaning of the lantern himself.

Mr Highway informed the group that the Highways Team are painting the railings by ASDA and have done an excellent job. The yellow marking on the steps are also being repainted.

Retailers in the town really appreciate the efforts of their hard work and the Chair requested that Mr Highway pass on the group's thanks for their work.

11. ROAD CLOSURE UPDATE

PS Mark Thomas advised that at the meeting that took place regarding the closure of the road on Thursday nights it was agreed that this will remain in force and be reviewed again in October 2015.

The Chair thanked PS Mark Thomas and requested that thanks be passed back to the Special Constabulary for their work to close High Street each Thursday evening.

12. CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET PAST & PRESENT

Mr Highway presented a PowerPoint presentation to the group on the progress of the "Choose the High Street Past & Present" campaign.

Members were advised that Mr Wilcox has been working with the local schools to participate in the artwork displays. The group were advised that officers had met with pupils from Blackwood Comprehensive who pitched their ideas for new businesses on the High Street as part of a Business Studies course. Councillor James stated that he went along and it was good to hear the pupils' ideas.

The 'street galleries' have been well received – since the photo boards were displayed in local shop windows people have expressed an interest in purchasing them.

The photos in the street galleries are available on the CCBC website, Flickr Page and exhibitions will take place in libraries in each town.

Mr Highway thanked Mr Wilcox for all of his hard work. Mr Highway also thanked Mr Hold for the photographs he provided

Cotton bags have been handed out in libraries to promote the campaign and a competition to win shopping vouchers has been launched.

The Chair thanked Mr Highway and Mr Wilcox for their report.

13. BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE AUDIT – APRIL 2015

Mr Highway advised that there were two issues he needed to bring to members' attention. The first was in respect of an incident outside Peacocks in the Market Place. The group were advised that a set of bollards had been demolished when a vehicle crashed through them into the store, causing extensive damage. The Police confirmed that this was not a ram raid and that the person had been arrested and there is an ongoing investigation. The driver is currently receiving treatment.

There were 3 bollards destroyed as well as the shop window. Officers have checked on the ownership of these bollards and can confirm that they are the responsibility of The Market Place Shopping Centre who will be looking to replace them. Peacocks is expected to re-open in the next few days.

The second item is that there have been complaints about people congregating and drinking around the bench by the bakery at the top of Gravel Lane.

PS Mark Thomas advised that the police have increased the number of calls to the area and the Community Safety Wardens have also been going out more frequently to disperse the groups and all will continue to monitor the problem.

The group were advised by PS Mark Thomas that there is going to be a Public Space Protection Order going to Cabinet in July, which will enable more powers move people on.

Mr Highway presented the audit report and advised that in respect of the site of the Poundstretcher building, brief discussions have taken place with the architect with regards to a new retail scheme on the first floor. The Head of Development control is aware of this.

Mr Highway has been requested by the manager of ASDA to thank Lyndon Ross and his team for dealing with the rat problem so promptly.

The cleaning of toilets in the Interchange Bus Station work was carried out promptly by Tony White's team and the Group passed on its thanks.

There were no further issues raised on the audit

The meeting closed 14:58.

CHAIR