



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 17TH OCTOBER 2014

SUBJECT: 'CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET' CAMPAIGN PROGRESS UPDATE

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information on the progress of the 'Choose the High Street' campaign run by the Council's Town Centre Management Team.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The 'Choose the High Street' campaign ran throughout the summer months across the five managed town centres. A number of promotional platforms were utilised to communicate the message to the public.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Council has agreed to a five-year regeneration programme entitled "People, Business and Places". The proposals within the strategy are based on a number of regeneration principles, one of which is "Strengthening Town Centres".
- 3.2 'A Prosperous Caerphilly' is identified as one of the key outcomes in the Council's 'Single Integrated Plan'. The Implementation of the *Unique Places* model of Town Centre Management in the County Borough's principal town centres is one of the actions identified to achieve this outcome.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Following the publication of the Portas Review in 2011, there has been a great deal of strategic thinking and media focus on the future of Britain's town centres. Subsequent reports and studies have all drawn attention to the threat posed to the high street by the growth in online shopping, particularly through the advent of Smartphone technology and also the expansion of out of town retail parks. In light of these changes in consumer spending, the active promotion of town centres is seen as key to their long-term survival and future growth. In Spring 2014, the Council's Town Centre Management team developed a new concept 'Choose the High Street', the aim was to use this brand across the five managed town centres in order to promote them as shopping destinations and business opportunities.
- 4.2 During the summer months the 'Choose the High Street' campaign was rolled out in Caerphilly, Blackwood, Bargoed, Risca and Ystrad Mynach town centres. The initiative moved away from the 'discount card' concept used at Christmas and took a twofold approach in promoting the town centres. Firstly, 'Choose the High Street' highlights the power of

consumer choice and asks shoppers to make a conscious decision to use their local high street. Secondly, it encourages new 'start up' businesses to locate onto the high street.

Summary of platforms utilised to promote the campaign:

- 5,000 x free canvas shopping bags given away in Libraries and Customer First Centres;
- 1,000 children's balloons given away at town centre events;
- 30,000 'concertina' leaflets given away in the Libraries, Customer First Centres and at town centre events – Caerphilly 10K / Blackwood Beach Party / Risca Hoe Down & Show Down / The BIG Cheese;
- Advertising billboards displayed in each town centre;
- 700 window stickers distributed to retailers across five town centres;
- Article in Newline - delivered to every household in the County Borough;
- Lamppost banners;
- YouTube videos produced;
- Content posted on Council's Facebook page;
- Content posted on Council's Twitter page;
- Re-development of the Town Centre pages on the Caerphilly County Borough Council website, with a banner placed prominently on the council website homepage to signpost visitors to the pages;
- Retail Property Directory site rebranded as 'Choose the High Street';
- 250 business leaflets sent to local banks, enterprise agencies, grant providers and Business Wales contacts;
- Proactive engagement with property agents who have shops for sale or let in the town centres.

4.3 Additional Promotion

As the campaign unfolded additional items were purchased in response to public demand and also to support the Welsh Governments 'Support Your High Street' seven day initiative between September 20th – 27th:

- An additional 3,000 free canvas shopping bags were ordered for Libraries, Customer First Centres and the new Mobile Customer Service Centre;
- A full-page Caerphilly Observer advert and accompanying web banner advert was placed.

4.4 Social Media

Social media platforms *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *YouTube* were used as a complementary mechanism to reinforce the messages promoted through press articles and roadside billboards.

YouTube film clips were produced involving local independent traders from each of the five town centres these helped to showcase the unique retail offering of each town centre. In each film clip, the retailers were united in conveying the message that there are many reasons why residents should choose to support their local high street. To date, the collective number of views of these film clips is in excess of 1,000.

Facebook and Twitter were used to reinforce the key messages of the campaign with in excess of a collective 14,000 followers. Throughout the three month first phase period, regular engagement activity took place to gauge residents' thoughts and views on a range of high street related issues including customer service and suggestions for potential enhancements to town centres in the future.

A 'closed' Facebook group was also created, to allow the County Borough's retailers a unique place where they can share best practice, ideas and potential opportunities to work collaboratively. This element of the campaign is in its very early stages, but will continue to be built upon over the coming months.

4.5 New Businesses

Since the 'Choose the High Street' initiative was launched in June a number of new businesses have opened in the five managed town centres:-

Business	Town Centre
Cadwalladers	Caerphilly
EMS Motorcycle Spares	Caerphilly
Gills Café & Coffee House	Caerphilly
Vapo Place Café	Caerphilly
Scruffy 2 Fluffy Pet Parlour	Bargoed
Simply at Home	Bargoed
Beauty by Emma	Bargoed
The Band Box	Risca
The Nook	Risca
Busy Bees Home Design	Risca
Amore	Ystrad Mynach
Coffee @ 37	Ystrad Mynach
Preachers Lounge Bar	Blackwood
Maxime Cinema	Blackwood
Jim's Traditional Fish & Chips	Blackwood
Learn About Wales	Blackwood

4.6 Potential New Businesses

In addition, Town Centre Management have provided information & support in response to enquiries from people looking to start the following businesses or establishing new projects:-

Business	Town Centre
Coffee Shop	Blackwood or Caerphilly
Crèche	Blackwood or Bargoed
Ex Service persons café	Blackwood
Coffee shop	Ystrad Mynach
Foodbank shop	Blackwood
Hope Rescue Charity Shop	Caerphilly
Win a Shop Project	Bargoed
Kickplate Photography Exhibition	All five town centres
Cafe	Caerphilly
Sports / School wear Shop	Ystrad Mynach
Indoor Sports Facility	Blackwood / Ystrad Mynach
Kitchen producing locally sourced food	Caerphilly
Coffee shop	Caerphilly

4.7 Retailer Survey Results

A total of 692 surveys were sent out to every business across the five managed town centres of those just 39 were returned, giving a response rate of just 5.6%.

Of the responses received, a summary of the results is below:-

Question	Yes	No	Unsure
Are you aware of the "Choose the High Street" campaign?	82%	18%	
Have you displayed the promotional window sticker?	72%	28%	
Are your customers aware of the "Choose the High Street" campaign?	30%	70%	
Do you think "Choose the High Street" was successful?	13%	61%	28%

Retailers were also asked which promotional tools they felt were the most successful. Social media and billboards were ranked the highest, followed by the window stickers, then the free canvas shopping bags and finally the leaflets distributed at events.

4.8 **Public Survey results:**

To supplement the retailers' survey, an online survey was also conducted asking members of the public for their views on the campaign so far.

The responses were gained through a combination of social media (CCBC Facebook and Twitter) and through email to the CCBC Viewpoint Panel Members.

A total of 114 people responded to the survey – and a summary of the results are below:-

4.9 **Question:-**

1. Have you heard of the Choose the High Street campaign? **Yes: 50% No: 49%.**
2. If you answered 'Yes' to question one, where have you seen the Choose the High Street campaign promoted? **The majority of respondents saw the campaign promoted through social media (40%), Newline (24%) and the local newspaper (20%).**
3. The Choose the High Street campaign aims to encourage local people to support their local town centres and local traders. Do you agree with the sentiments of the campaign? That is, do you support what the council is trying to achieve through this campaign? **Yes: 88% No: 4% Not Sure: 7%.**
4. How often, on average do you visit your local town centre? **The majority of residents said they visited their town centres once a week (30%), most days (19%) and fortnightly (14%). 11% said they rarely visit their local town centre and 1% said they never do.**
5. Which Caerphilly County Borough town centre do you visit most often? **The responses, in descending order were Caerphilly (39%), Blackwood (32%), Risca (10%), Ystrad Mynach (6%), Bargoed (6%) and None (4%).**
6. What would encourage you to visit your local town centre more often than you currently do? **This question generated a total of 98 responses. The issue that drew the most responses (37) was the provision of free / better parking, the second highest number of responses (35) related to the need for an improved shopping offer. A small number of other responses highlighted better street cleansing, longer shop opening hours and retailers running special offers as suggestions for improvements.**
7. Would a Christmas/festive discount offer encourage you to support a retailer in your local town centre? **Yes: 58%, No: 15%, Not Sure: 26%.**

4.10 **Summary**

The 'Choose the High Street' campaign was the first stage in a longer process to raise awareness of the need for people to support their local town centre. Since the launch of the campaign in the County Borough, a UK wide effort to promote the 'Great British High Street' and a one-week initiative by Welsh Government - 'Support Welsh High Streets' have both taken place. This demonstrates that the council's 'Choose the High Street' campaign is in line with current strategic thinking on town centre development.

Various marketing platforms have been used to make consumers, retailers and potential business start-ups aware of the 'Choose the High Street' brand. However, realistically, this will take time, as it is impossible to encourage a permanent behavioural change over just a three-month period. In the coming months officers will continue to support local retailers in developing new ways to use the 'Choose the High Street' brand to promote the five town as shopping destinations and business opportunities.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the council's Eqla process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The campaign is funded through the Town Centre Management core budget.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 This report is for information only.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Endorsements for 'Choose the High Street'