



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH OCTOBER 2014 AT 1.30 PM

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Councillors N. Dix, K. James, C. Hawker, A. Rees, T. Williams

Together with:

Councillor C. Erasmus (Town Councillor), Z. Hammond (Town Councillor)

Also:

A. Highway (Town Centre Manager), S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager),
A. Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal & Conservation), P. Hudson (Marketing and
Events Manager), A. Jones (Complaints Officer - Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors: D.T. Davies, P. Cook
Ian MacVicar

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES OF MEETING

Mr. J. Hold was present but not noted in the minutes as attendee.

The previous minutes were taken as read, subject to the amendment above.

4. AREA FORUM BUDGET BALANCE

Mr Highway advised the group that the current balance in the Area Forum budget is £7,657.
The group were advised that the Area Forum Budget is available for the maintenance and
upkeep of the town or other things that the group felt were appropriate to fund.

Councillor James confirmed that each town will hold onto their current balance but the total annual budget of £72,000 may not be available but no decision has yet been made.

Mr. Hold advised that the Town Council would be looking for support with funding of the hanging baskets. Mr. Highway advised that this could be brought to a future meeting and a report presented to the group.

The group decided to vote to contribute £2,000 from the area forum budget towards the hanging basket displays.

The votes were 6 in favour with no abstentions

Mr. Dallimore will discuss the most economical options in relation to supply and watering of the baskets with Park Services.

5. BLACKWOOD CHRISTMAS MARKET 2014

Mr. Hudson discussed the previous success of the Christmas Market, but wanted to add more vibrancy to this year's event.

The group were advised that although the event is now well known, an extensive promotional campaign would be used again this year. To this end, a request for funding of £2,000 from the Area Forum Budget was made to pay for a regional radio campaign specifically for the event.

Members unanimously agreed to the £2,000 of funding, all were in favour. There were no abstentions.

Councillor Rees asked if Facebook would be considered to advertise the event. Mr. Hudson advised that corporate Facebook accounts would be publicising the Christmas events programme.

6. COUNCILLOR DIX PROPOSAL AREA FORUM BUDGET BALANCE TO BE RETAINED FOR MAINTENANCE FOR TOWN CENTRE

This item was covered when discussing item number 4.

7. CONSULTATION ON NEW BMI LOGO

Mr. Highway informed the group that the new logo was not as yet finalised but it was hoped that this item could be brought to a future meeting

8. 'CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET' CAMPAIGN PROGRESS UPDATE

Mr. Highway informed the group that the Portas Review (2011) identified several threats to town centres. The "Choose the High Street" (CTHS) campaign aimed to promote the county borough's principal town centres to the public and businesses alike. Starting in the summer of 2014, the CTHS initiative used several platforms to highlight the brand and town centres; these included: free cotton shopping bags bearing the logo, billboards in the town centres, balloons and leaflets distributed at summer events and a series of YouTube videos.

The number of new businesses and potential business enquiries were summarised in the report, along with feedback from business and public surveys, which gave differing perceptions of the campaign. However, it was noted that there was a very small number of business surveys received.

The campaign is intended to be long-term, aiming to make people change their attitudes and shopping habits to support local businesses. Mr. Highway stated that it would continue as long as budgetary commitments allowed, bearing in mind the Medium Term Financial Plan for the Authority.

9. 'CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET @ CHRISTMAS'

Mr. Highway provided an overview of the "Choose the High Street @ Christmas" campaign, which aims to link in with the existing, ongoing campaign, but also continue the Christmas discount scheme that has been run since 2012.

Following feedback from previous years, it was decided that the format for 2014 would be slightly different. During the last two years, any offers submitted by businesses were listed on a website. To redeem the relevant offer, the consumer would present a discount card at the time of sale. This was deemed to be too complicated by businesses and was supported by the fact that transactional use of the card was low, despite 30,000 cards being distributed across the County Borough.

The Christmas 2014 format is based around a voucher booklet. To redeem an offer, the relevant voucher is cut out from the booklet and presented at the time of sale. Businesses were sent a letter, sign-up form and prepaid return envelope with the Town Centre Gazette and this simpler format has proved popular, resulting in 92 offers being received – the highest to date.

Voucher booklets will be available in Libraries and Customer First centres in the town centres, as well as at some of the visitor attractions. Publicity of the scheme, which goes live on 1st December 2014, will be via Heart FM, The South Wales Advertiser, Caerphilly Observer, Newline, CCBC's website and social media.

A second element of the Christmas campaign is the launch of a "Pop-Up Shop Guide" that outlines the steps that need to be undertaken in order to establish a short-term use of a property. This is particularly useful for budding entrepreneurs who want to try a business model during the key pre-Christmas trading period. The guide is available in both hard and electronic copy.

Members thanked Mr. Highway and Mr. Wilcox for their report

10. FOOTPATH FROM BLACKWOOD GATE RETAIL PARK

Mr. Dallimore informed the group that the footpath was a temporary path with steps which are not in the best condition. This will be referred to the relevant officers to deal with.

Councillor Rees raised concern of hazardous situations, where members of the public have to step onto the road to go to the Bumble Bee, as there is no footpath.

Mr. Dallimore will take this matter up with the Engineering division.

11. 'MAXIME' CINEMA UPDATE

Mr. Highway confirmed that the cinema is a huge success. Discussions with the operator have confirmed that the operator is so pleased with the success he is going to use the 'Maxime' cinema as his flagship cinema. Within the first few weeks the operator recorded 35,000 visitors.

Other retailers have noticed a difference and have confirmed that it is very good for the town.

This is likely to encourage new businesses to the town.

The Chairman did highlight a few incidents where groups were congregating outside and damage had been reported. Police Officers have made regular visits to the cinema's foyer area to liaise with staff. The area will be monitored especially on the build up to Christmas.

Councillor Hammond advised the group that the partnership is working really well and the cinema has put on special events such as a Billy Elliott event.

12. PROPOSAL FOR THE RETENTION OF COMMUNITY RESPONSE TEAM CRT SERVICES

Mr. Highway confirmed that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

13. BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE AUDIT

Councillor Williams is going to liaise with traffic management regarding the signs for the new disabled parking bay.

Mr. Dallimore confirmed that the monies have been approved and the works will be proceeding as soon as possible on the installation of posts and road studs on crossing outside Argos.

Poundstretcher site. Mr. Highway advised that there is still an issue with the insurers and that it is not known if Poundstretchers are obligated to return to the high street when the property is rebuilt.

Homeless People. The Chairman confirmed that he attended a meeting on the 16th October regarding the issue of homeless people. There is an increase and the police have been very proactive as well as other charitable groups. In addition a Homeless Officer has been appointed for 6 months.

Hopefully this will be resolved and the Chairman and Mr. Highway will keep the group informed.

Rat problem by Asda. Mr. Highway confirmed that the Council have been and placed bait down and shrubbery has been cut back. The Manager of the store is very pleased with the response from the Council.

There were no further issues raised on the audit.

The meeting closed 2.39 pm.

CHAIRMAN