



BARGOED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN
ON MONDAY, 1ST NOVEMBER 2004 AT 3.30 PM**

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies - Chairman
Councillor D.G. Carter - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

H.A. Andrews, A.G. Higgs, Mrs. D. Price

Together with:

Mr I. Hill and Mr M. Barry (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), Community Councillors I. Hughes and L. Harding (Bargoed Town Council)

R. Tanner (Strategic Planning and Urban Renewal Manager), I.G. MacVicar (Business Development Officer), B. Morgan (Senior Planner – Urban Renewal), R. Campbell (Senior Assistant Engineer), E. Gibbs (Principal Officer, Traffic Management), A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer)

By invitation: Mr J. Cooper – Representing the Residents' Association

Representing Camlin Longsdale Consultants:

C. Loyn, H. Robinson, H. Thomas, K. Franke, H. Budnik, S. Farmhelt, H. Morgan, M. Ritchie

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E.K. Griffiths, K.V. Reynolds, Mr. P. Collins (Bargoed Chamber of Trade) and Inspector Childs, Gwent Police.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed Mr Andrew Highway who had recently been appointed to the new post of Town Centre Development Manager.

3. BARGOED DESIGN STUDY – CAMLIN LONGSDALE CONSULTANTS

A welcome was extended to the representatives of Camlin Longsdale, the consultants who had been appointed to undertake the design study.

Huw Morgan, lead officer for the Team, explained the purpose of their visit and invited the members of the management group to present their ideas and aspirations for the future of the town.

The following ideas for the town were put forward by the management group:-

- An indoor sporting complex/multi screen cinema complex.
- Office development.
- Well-known stores.
- The need to take full advantage of all initiatives under the WDA , to implement the works of the Smart Alternative report and exploit the by-pass.
- To make the town an attractive place to visit and shop.
- Easy access from the main street and good links between the plateau and the High Street.
- Provision of shopping arcades and pedestrianisation of the main shopping area.
- Economic regeneration alongside the by-pass.

The consultants offered their impression of the town centre from an urban design perspective and sought the group's views on the options for the retail plateau. At the time of the Donaldson report it had not been clear about the timing of the by-pass. The consultants could now return to the major retailers advising them that the by-pass would be going ahead. The retailers' decision would need to be known before alternative options eg. leisure facilities could be investigated. It was pointed out that development opportunities could also be created in the High Street if some of the retailers decided to move to the plateau.

Reference was made to the problem of traffic congestion in the town and it was reported that there were proposals to increase the frequency of the rail service to Bargoed.

Attention was drawn to the number of shops in the town with steel shutter frontages and discussion ensued on ways of improving the public perception of the town by replacing the shutters with a more attractive alternative that would allow the goods in the shops to be viewed after normal trading hours whilst also being protected. It was requested that the consultants visit the town after normal trading hours to investigate the possibilities.

Other issues raised by the management group included the need for traders to be made aware of their responsibilities to ensure that the rear area of their premises is brought up to standard from an environmental point of view.

The reasons why people are not choosing to shop in Bargoed i.e. lack of choice, impact of competition from other towns in the county borough, traffic congestion, pavements too narrow etc were also discussed.

It was reported that the Council undertakes a survey of the 3 town centres every 3 years asking the public what they like/don't like about the towns. The surveys had shown that Bargoed was the most unpopular town centre in the county borough.

Officers pointed out that consideration would be given to reducing the highway status of the High Street and Hanbury Road once the by-pass was in place. It was reported that any widening of the pavements would result in a narrowing of the highway and an increase in traffic congestion.

The Chairman thanked the consultants for their contribution to the meeting. It was anticipated that the consultants' report would be ready early in the new year. In the meantime, the consultants invited the management group to contact them if there were any aspects of the town centre proposals they wished to discuss.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2004 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

5. Hospital Site (minute no. 7)

It was reported that a joint meeting of the LHB and the Trust on 18th November would consider the final business plan to be presented to the Welsh Assembly Government.

Officers pointed out that there were traffic issues relating to the proposed Ystrad Mynach site.

6. Public Disorder Issues (minute no. 10)

The Chair referred to an update which had been received from Inspector Childs who was unable to attend the meeting.

Meetings had been arranged with the residents association and also with the chairman, secretary and steward of the rugby club in relation to anti social behaviour issues in the town. It was reported that the Police had spent a great deal of time over a 17 day period visiting the Square. As a consequence, several people had been issued with ASBO's and several vehicles had been moved on during that period.

It was considered that the situation at the Square had improved although concern was expressed that the problem had moved to different areas of the town.

Mr Highway suggested that the control centre manager at Tiryberth be invited to attend a future meeting of the group to discuss issues relating to CCTV coverage in the town.

7. Environmental Issues (minute no. 13)

Mr Campbell indicated that he had inspected the St Gwladys car park access. The retaining wall did interfere with visibility to the left along Bristol Terrace when exiting the Council's car park. However, the wall was essential for structural support reasons. The visibility splays had been taken into account when the car park and the wall were originally designed a couple of years ago and there was very little scope to lessen the extent of the wall at the construction stage. Whilst the visibility splay to the left was not ideal, it was not considered unsafe. Visibility to the right was unhindered and Mr Campbell had witnessed drivers turning right, exiting the car park and carefully moving towards the centre of Bristol Terrace to improve their visibility left along the terrace before completing their manoeuvre. Vehicular speeds along Bristol Terrace past the car park access towards the High Street were generally low with drivers decelerating for the 'Give Way' onto the main road.

Mr Campbell was satisfied that the access was safe as long as care was taken by the car park users.

8. Bargoed By-Pass (minute no. 14)

It was agreed that a detailed update would be given at the next meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9. Party in the Park

Mr Hill referred to the success of the “Party in the Park” held in Bargoed park during the summer period and asked whether the Authority would be able to offer assistance in staging the event - which fell between the “Big Cheese” and the “Big Balloon” - in the future.

Mr MacVicar, Business Development Officer, indicated that he would discuss the matter with the Head of Economic Development and Tourism and report back.

10. Dog Fouling

The problem of dog fouling in the town was raised. Mr MacVicar indicated that he would refer this matter to the Environmental Services Division.

In addition, Mr MacVicar advised that a report was being prepared for consideration by Cabinet proposing that a Town Centre Improvement Group, to be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, be established with appropriate representation from relevant service areas. A representative from Gwent Police would also be invited to sit on the Group.

The remit of the Town Centre Improvement Group would include providing an internal forum for CCBC to address issues that blight town centres.

The Group would be complementary to the existing Town Centre Management Groups and would ensure that environmental matters which are the responsibility of CCBC, were addressed as expeditiously as possible.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Monday, 20th December 2004.

The meeting closed at 5.05 pm.