



BARGOED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER 2005 AT 3.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D.G. Carter - Chairman
Councillor Mrs D. Price - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

D.T. Davies, E.K. Griffiths, A.G. Higgs

Together with:

Community Councillors I. Hughes & L. Harding, Messrs. I. Hill & P. Collins (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), Mr. J. Cooper (local resident), Mr. J. Dilworth (Clerk to Bargoed TC).

R. Tanner (Strategic Planning & Urban Renewal Manager), A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), B. Morgan (Project Officer, Urban Renewal), D. Churchward (Network Management Engineer), A. Crabb (Facilities Officer), J. Ridgewell (Parks Business Development Manager), R. Campbell & L. Williams (Traffic Management), R. Murphy (Communities First Coordinator), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors H.A. Andrews and K.V. Reynolds. Ian MacVicar (Business Development Officer) and Edgar Gibbs (Principal Officer, Traffic Management).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2005 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

Mr Cooper advised that he had not been updated on the situation with regard to Best Kebabs as recorded in the minutes and that there were still problems in the area. The Chair indicated that he would discuss with the Police. Members of the Management Group were asked to contact Environmental Services if they experienced further problems.

4. BARGOED TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION STUDY

Mr Roger Tanner, Strategic Planning and Urban Renewal Manager, presented the report which would be submitted to Scrutiny and Cabinet in due course.

In August 2004 consultants Camlin Lonsdale had been commissioned to undertake a regeneration study for Bargoed Town Centre. The study, which was now complete, identified radical and innovative proposals for the town centre and addressed the regeneration and economic potential of the town centre in the light of the proposals for the new road.

The study identified a number of phased initiatives for the town (referred to by the consultants as packages). These packages represented a phased programme of investment. The later packages, in particular, might change over time depending on the level of interest shown by private sector investors.

The principle and most radical of the proposals, Package 2, affected the area around the library. The library and 12 adjacent properties would be demolished under these proposals. A new plateau was proposed at the southern end of the town in order to create a tiered shopping centre with a frontage onto Hanbury Road and a large food store underneath at basement level opening at the rear onto a large parking area. A 'town wall' would contain the plateau and support a promenade providing views over the country park and surrounding area.

Discussion ensued on the financial implications and the issue of funding sources bearing in mind that some of the proposed projects would need to run parallel with the construction of the relief road.

Mr Tanner advised that a joint venture could raise the sort of finance required for projects of this nature and that now could be the right time to bid, with the Heads of the Valleys Initiative still in its infancy.

Mr Tanner drew attention to recommendation (iii) of the report which proposed that a request be made for an urgent meeting between the WAG Minister for Economic Development and Transportation, the Leader of the Council and appropriate Cabinet members, with a view to exploring possible methods of funding the proposals in the context of the Heads of the Valleys initiative. It was suggested that the WDA and Heads of the Valleys Board should also be approached on this basis.

Mr Tanner also drew attention to recommendation (vii), which advised that proceedings were being instigated with regard to acquiring No 45 Hanbury Road for public open space.

In response to concerns raised in relation to the future of the library, Mr Tanner advised that it was proposed that an officer working group be established to discuss the relocation in detail.

The Town Centre Management Group endorsed the following recommendations as set out in the report which would now be referred to the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for consideration: -

- i) That the Camlin Lonsdale “Bargoed Town Centre Study” be approved in general as a basis for the future regeneration of the town centre.
- ii) That officers be instructed to take the necessary steps to progress the implementation of ‘Packages 0,1 and 2’ of the study, with priority being given to ‘Package 2’ involving the comprehensive redevelopment of the area around the library.
- iii) In furtherance of ii) above a request be made for an urgent meeting between the Welsh Assembly Minister for Economic Development and Transportation and the Leader of the Council and appropriate cabinet members, with a view to exploring possible methods of funding the proposals in the context of the Heads of the Valleys Initiative. The WDA and Heads of the Valleys Board should also be approached on this basis.
- iv) That owners and occupiers of properties to be acquired and demolished under ‘Packages 0, 1 and 2’ be informed of the Council’s plans so that they can make appropriate arrangements and to limit uncertainty and blight in the area.
- v) That officers urgently investigate alternative locations for the town’s public library.
- vi) That the detailed plans for the new relief road to Bargoed be assessed in relation to the Camlin Lonsdale ‘Package 1’ and ‘Package 2’ proposals.
- vii) That appropriate steps be taken to acquire the site of No. 45 Hanbury Road for public open space.
- viii) That officers prepare a new action plan for Bargoed town centre, based on the Camlin Lonsdale study, to be eventually adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

The Chairman thanked officers for their contribution to the town centre study.

5. ST GWLADYS GARDENS

Mr. John Ridgewell, Parks Business Development Manager, attended the meeting following concerns raised at a previous meeting about the appearance of this area. Mr Ridgewell outlined his proposals for land in the ownership of the Council which included the planting of ornamental flowerbeds and exotic plants.

Mr. Hill referred to the potential for an attractive seating area to be incorporated into the plans for the area. Councillor Davies suggested that the Town Council arrange a meeting with the Chamber of Trade, Council Officers and possibly representatives of the Church, to discuss the best way forward.

The Town Centre Management Group endorsed the proposal.

6. REPORT OF THE TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Mr Highway briefed the Town Centre Management Group on trading conditions across the county borough. He reported that the situation was generally difficult at present and unlikely to improve in the short term. Rising petrol costs, domestic fuel bills etc were all having an adverse affect on the public’s ability to spend.

With regard to Bargoed in particular, Mr Highway advised that a new electrical business in the town was proving to be quite successful and that Woolworths was in the process of having a re-fit. Funds had been allocated for town centre maintenance and new furniture would be installed along Hanbury Road to make it appear more welcoming.

The latest continental market held in the town had been very poorly attended and it was unlikely that there would be any plans for it to return to Bargoed in the foreseeable future.

Mr Highway recorded his appreciation of the assistance he had received from Ann Franklin, Marketing Officer, in producing the banners that had been erected in the town centres. The banners gave a fresh image to the town centre and would hopefully send positive messages to retailers and the public that things were moving.

The issue of shops closing early on Saturday afternoons and the impact on other businesses in the town centre was again discussed.

7. REPORT OF THE CHAMBER OF TRADE

It was noted that the Chamber of Trade had met earlier in the week. The main topic of discussion at the meeting had been the regeneration study. Discussion had also taken place on the arrangements for the Christmas Grotto and Parade.

Richard Murphy, Communities First, indicated that it was anticipated that some funding would be available to assist with the proposals.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- The Management Group received an update on the relief road scheme from Dave Churchward, Network Management Engineer and Ian Goldsworthy and Dave Evans, Capita Symonds.

It was noted that the design of the 3 main structures was nearing completion. Progress was being made on the preparation of the contract documents and it was anticipated that this would proceed to tender in the autumn of this year.

The CPO's for the scheme which had been published in October 2003 had not yet been confirmed by the Welsh Assembly Government as there was an outstanding objection from Woolworths in relation to technical issues.

With regard to ecological issues, Ian Goldsworthy advised that a reptile survey had been undertaken and that surveys of the birds, bats and otter populations in the country park were ongoing.

The scheme for the relief road had been advertised in the European Journal inviting interested parties to register. There had been 13 responses from contractors all over Europe. A pre-qualification questionnaire had been published and responses were in the process of being assessed. Five companies would be invited to tender.

A Transport Grant bid had been submitted to WAG. The total outturn cost of the scheme was valued at £30.5m.

Mr Goldsworthy explained that there were problems with one of the structures. Possible solutions to overcome the problem were being examined and could cause some delay with the scheme.

The Environment Agency had accepted an amendment put forward but this was subject to crayfish and bat surveys.

It was intended to complete the main infrastructure work in the first place. The widening of the footways and hard landscaping would follow when the heavy engineering work had been undertaken. The access road would be built when the existing railway bridge was demolished.

- Mr Evans, Capita Symonds, advised that the works to the town centre had been audited. A number of comments had been received and most of the issues had now been rectified.

Concerns had been raised about the lay-by outside the Spar shop. It was proposed to undertake a temporary shortening of the lay-by to prevent lorries parking at the top end. There were also a number of minor issues relating to signage.

Councillor Price indicated that she had received further complaints relating to visibility at the pedestrian crossing by Barclays Bank.

- Bryan Morgan advised the Group that the situation regarding the railway station was outside the Council's control.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 30th November 2005 at 2.30 p.m.