



BARGOED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING HELD AT THE SETTLEMENT, BARGOED ON MONDAY, 16TH JANUARY 2006 AT 2.30 PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

H.A. Andrews, D.T. Davies, A.G. Higgs, K.V. Reynolds

Together with:

Community Councillors I. Hughes and L. Harding, Messrs P. Collins and D. Collins* (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), Inspector R. Doidge and S. Williams (Gwent Police), Mr. J. Cooper (Local Resident), Mr J. Cuthbert AM.

Mr. L. Evans (Highway Infrastructure Manager), Mr. A. Isaacs (Head of Corporate Finance), Mr. A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), S. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer), Mr. B. Morgan (Project Officer, Urban Renewal), Mr. J. Rogers (Principal Solicitor),

* Mr D. Collins was the nominated substitute for Mr I. Hill who had tendered his apologies for the meeting.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr I. Hill (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), Councillor E.K. Griffiths, Mr I. MacVicar (Business Development Officer) and Mr R. Murphy (Communities First).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

2. RETAINING WALL COLLAPSE, STATION ROAD, BARGOED

The Chairman of the Town Centre Management Group, Councillor David Carter, welcomed those present to the special meeting which had been convened to discuss matters relating to the retaining wall collapse at Station Road, Bargoed.

Councillor Carter advised that a meeting was also being held at 5.30 pm that evening with the Chamber of Trade and Members and Officers of the Council. In addition, a report was being

presented to the Council's Cabinet on Tuesday, 17th January 2006 in connection with this matter.

Mr. Lee Evans, the Council's Highway Infrastructure Manager, was then invited to brief the forum on the present situation relating to the collapse of a retaining wall at Station Road, Bargoed.

The retaining wall had collapsed at approximately 17.00 hours on Monday, 9th January 2006. Upon notification of the incident, highway staff inspected the site and immediately closed the road to all vehicular traffic. Road closure signs were erected and the area was isolated using Heras fencing in order to safeguard public safety.

The collapse had resulted in the complete removal of a section of footway over a length of 14 metres. Underground services were exposed and the appropriate statutory undertakers contacted in order to determine any emergency work required. It had subsequently been found necessary to disconnect a low voltage electricity supply and install a temporary diversion overhead to maintain the electricity supply to adjoining properties. Each of the statutory undertakers were reviewing the effect of the incident on their apparatus.

The closure of Station Road had lead to considerable disruption to bus routes and private transport in the area. In addition, businesses in the town had reported a reduction in customers which was likely to worsen during the period of the closure.

Mr. Evans emphasised that it was vital that the emergency temporary signs be replaced advising the public of the designated diversion routes, the extent of the closure and that the town centre was open for business.

Following Mr. Evans' address Members of the Management Group were given an opportunity to ask questions relating to the incident.

- Mr. Evans confirmed that the Authority would be examining all options available to try and resolve the situation within the earliest possible timescale. He advised that he had been in discussions with the owner of the land who had given his permission for the Authority to enter onto his land to undertake investigations and to install a temporary embankment.
- Clarification was sought in relation to the cost implications arising from the emergency measures that had needed to be taken by the Council as a result of the incident.
- Mr. Evans advised that the financial implications associated with the emergency action and reconstruction of the retaining wall had yet to be determined and it was anticipated that significant expenditure would be incurred for which there was no budget provision. The Council's legal position in terms of deemed responsibility for the collapse and the closure of the public highway and all attendant costs would be confirmed in a letter to the owner of the land/property. A report outlining the details of the incident, together with estimated costs, would be submitted to the meeting of Cabinet on 17th January.
- Mr. Evans indicated that the Authority was currently reviewing the temporary traffic signs which had been erected at approaches to the town centre following the incident and that any necessary adjustments would be made.
- A shuttle bus service was now in operation and other buses were starting to operate.

Mr. Evans acknowledged the concerns of all those affected by the incident and gave assurances that the Authority would do everything it could to alleviate the situation within the shortest possible timescale.

Mr. Adrian Isaacs, the Council's Head of Corporate Finance, was then invited to advise on financial issues.

Mr. Isaacs indicated that the Council acknowledged the difficulties facing retailers at present and advised that he would be happy to meet representatives of individual business to discuss any financial concerns they might have following the incident and its potential impact on the economy of the town. In particular, assistance with business rates was referred to as was Business Interruption Insurance which businesses may or may not have.

The Chamber of Trade expressed strong concerns that some businesses could suffer serious hardship if the situation was prolonged for a period of time.

Mr. Issacs advised that whilst businesses would be required to produce clear evidence that there had been an impact on their income in comparison with the same period last year, he offered an in principle commitment that the Council would assist them with business rates.

Local Members expressed grave concerns about the impact on local traders and the town centre and gave assurances that everything possible was being done to try and alleviate the situation and to ensure that the road was ready to be re-opened in the shortest possible timescale.

Mr. Jeff Cuthbert AM advised the meeting that he had made Sue Essex, Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services, aware of the situation and was awaiting a response from her as to whether the WAG could offer any assistance in this matter.

Local members placed on record their sincere thanks to all those who had been involved in the operation for the way in which they had responded to the situation and for their tremendous efforts to date.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 3.05 pm and reminded those present of the meeting arranged for later that evening with the Chamber of Trade.