



BARGOED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE INNOVATION CENTRE ON WEDNESDAY, 22ND JULY 2008 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

H.A. Andrews, D.G. Carter, D.T. Davies and A.G. Higgs
R. Davies – Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Countryside

Together with:

Mr. A. Strinarti (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), Mr. Cooper (Local Resident), D. Morgan and H. Llewellyn (Bargoed Town Council) and J. Coles (Hochtief Griffiths).

R. Tanner (Strategic Planning & Urban Renewal), A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), D. Churchward (Network Management Engineer), C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), A. Franklin (Marketing Officer – Business Development), D. Price (Principal Parks & Open Spaces Officer), R. Murphy and R. Evans (Communities First) and D. Phillips (Partnership Support Officer).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. D. Price and K.V. Reynolds and I. Hughes (Bargoed Town Council), P. Collins, D. Collins and I. Hill (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), B. Morgan (Senior Planner – Urban Renewal), J. Elliott (Policy Officer) and P. Hudson (Assistant Tourism Officer).

1. WELCOME

Councillor R. Davies was welcomed to his first meeting of the Management Group as Cabinet member for Regeneration and Countryside.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN / VICE CHAIRMAN

Councillor D. Carter was elected Chairman and Councillor Mrs D. Price as the Vice Chair of the Management Group.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4. MINUTES - 16TH APRIL 2008

The minutes of the Bargoed Town Centre Management Group held on 16th April 2008 were received and noted.

MATTERS ARISING

5. Retail Development Proposal (Minute no 5)

An Aberbargoed ward member expressed concern on the lack of communication to him and other local members with the information that the preferred developer for the Bargoed Retail Plateau had withdrawn. He reported that he had contacted the Chief Executive to express his concern that details of a developer withdrawing from a major retail proposal appeared to be in the public domain before the local councillors were informed of any details.

It was stated that local members need to be fully briefed on major issues in their area as soon as possible in order for them to give honest, positive responses to constituents and hopefully dispel any negative rumours.

It was reported that Bargoed Town Council would also be expressing concern on this matter to the Chief Executive.

6. PRESENTATION – ANGEL WAY AND BARGOED REGENERATION

Mr. John Coles, Liaison Co-ordinator for Hochtief Griffiths, was attending the meeting to give a progress report on the project to date and outline the anticipated programme of works for the next few months.

He reported that although there had been some recent bad weather excellent progress had been made.

A power point presentation illustrating the progress to date at various locations was shown and it was noted that an important milestone had recently been completed on time i.e. the Cross Valley Link which opened to traffic on the 1st June and will now allow for the demolition of the existing road bridge at Bargoed station.

During the next few months the earthworks will continue on the retail plateau and work will also commence on the bus station (officers in the Urban Renewal section are currently working on designs for the area). A question was raised on the availability of grants to upgrade the appearance of the rear of the shops near the near bus station and Mr. Tanner reported that there is presently a small budget for Commercial Improvement Grants but that there may also be an opportunity to access Town Centre Improvement Grants as these may be available to retailers in town centres in the future.

Funding will also be sought by officers for a new park and ride facility near the railway station.

All photographs and progress on the Bargoed Regeneration can be viewed on www.hochtief-griffiths.co.uk/bargoed

A series of aerial photographs were also shown to the Group.

The Cabinet member acknowledged all the hard work to date on the Bargoed Regeneration scheme and hoped that a successful outcome would be achieved on the retail development. He reported that he had last week discussed the situation at the northern end of the town with a number of retailers and had given an assurance that he would consider a number of practical solutions to try and address their concerns. He felt there was a feeling of optimism for the future from the traders and would be attending the Bargoed Chamber of Trade meeting on the 8th

September when all retailers from the town would be invited to attend and discuss their issues.

7. RETAIL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Mr. Tanner reported that since the last meeting Asda had withdrawn their interest in the site. When he was notified of this decision the developer (ASM Properties Ltd) had indicated that they still wished to try and proceed with the scheme but with an alternative anchor retail store and funder. He therefore sought legal and procurement advice that necessitated a delay in communicating the withdrawal. The outcome was that the ASM bid was considered to be severely compromised and therefore negotiations should be opened with the Reserve Developer instead.

Discussions have therefore been held with the Reserve Developer, Simons. Negotiations to date have been very positive. Earlier technical reservations in the foundations are being addressed by the prospective developer and although this would increase their costs it may be offset by increasing the size and value of the retail store. Should negotiations be successful a report will be presented to Cabinet for approval in September.

It was agreed that members of the Group had always been given as much privileged information as possible from Mr. Tanner and they were reminded that occasionally the sensitivity of a situation can constrain this.

8. UPDATE ON THE RELOCATION OF BARGOED LIBRARY

It was reported that the library and health centre needed to be re-located in order to facilitate the new retail development. The health centre would move to the previous Job Centre and it is hoped that the permanent location for a new library would be at Hanbury Road Baptist Chapel.

United Welsh Housing Association have indicated that they would purchase the building, refurbish it and then rent it to the council for a library.

The project is complicated by the listed building status on the building and the wish of the remaining congregation to retain a place of worship within the building. They have expressed concern at the suggestion that this area of worship be located on the lower ground floor but this is the only viable situation.

A number of meetings to progress the development have therefore been arranged with a view to resolving these issues.

It was suggested however that further options should be explored in case these negotiations are unsuccessful.

9. UPDATE ON ST GWLADYS GARDENS

Mr. Price, Principal Parks & Open Spaces Officer reported that the work to St. Gwladys Gardens was near completion. The tiles had been coated with a varnish to enable them to be cleaned easily if required.

It was requested that the grass area in the vicinity of the gardens be cut and Mr. Price indicated that he anticipated that this would be done at the end of this week.

10. BARGOED EVENTS

It was reported that a bid to the Heads of the Valleys Programme for an events officer had been successful. Barbara Green had been appointed and will be working primarily on promoting the

Big Screen (2 are currently planned for this year). It was clarified that her post was part of a three year funding programme which will end in April 2010. After this date it is anticipated that there will be an opportunity to apply to HoV for a continuation of funding.

The dates and details of the following events were reported:-

- Bargoed Big Bed – August 9th, 12.00-7.30pm – The Chamber of Trade indicated that they would be distributing free cloth shopping bags at this event.
- Bargoed Big Tackle – September 2nd – 16 teams have indicated that they will take part in a rugby tournament in the park. The event will be used to raise awareness of men's health issues.

Mr. Highway reported that he is also hoping to arrange a fun day event for Bargoed in September located at the northern retail area of the town.

Ann Franklin (Marketing Officer – Business Development) also made reference to the work being undertaken to compile a database on local businesses.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Car Parking

The representative from the Chamber of Trade expressed concern at the present problems with parking in the town. The temporary reduction in the size of the southern car park had resulted in the free car parks being full all day and he asked if some concession on charges in the other car parks could be given.

Mr. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager) replied that he understood the current pressures of parking but would be unable to suspend charges in the car parks as other towns in the county borough had not received any concession on parking charges during construction work. The Cabinet member indicated however that he would investigate any alternative short-term practical solution to the car parking concerns.

The Chamber of Trade asked that the Police and local traffic wardens use more discretion when dealing with drivers who stop to use the shops in the town. Mr. Highway agreed to contact Inspector Staniforth concerning this matter to ask for his views.

Bargoed Town Centre Action Plan

Mr. Tanner reported that the Bargoed Action Plan would be available from late August and that a six-week consultation period would follow. The Plan would consolidate all the changes since the previous plan was produced in 2003.

12. ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Environmental Audit

The Environmental Audit for July 2008 was received and noted.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 15th October 2008.

The meeting closed at 3.25 p.m.