



BARGOED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE ON THURSDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2010 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Carter – Chairman

Councillors:

D.T. Davies and A.G. Higgs

Together with:

Mr. D. Mogan (Bargoed Town Council) and Messrs D. Collins, S. Murray and I. Hill (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), Mrs. P. Cooper (Local Resident) and K. Wright (Traffic Warden- Gwent Police).

Also with:

R. Tanner (Strategic Planner and Urban Renewal Manager), C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), J. Bennett (Group Manager – Advisory Services), A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), L. Hughes (Communities First), R. Hughes (Events and Marketing Officer), J. Elliott (Research Officer) and D. Phillips (Partnership Support Officer).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Davies – Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Countryside, Councillors H.A. Andrews, Mrs. D. Price and K.V. Reynolds, Mr. P. Collins (Bargoed Chamber of Trade) and Mr J. Cooper (Local Resident).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

2. MINUTES - 20TH JANUARY 2010

The minutes of the Bargoed Town Centre Management Group held on 19th May 2010 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

3. CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO MEET BUDGET CUTS - THE FUTURE OF CASHIERING FUNCTIONS

The Chair, Councillor Carter, raised concerns on a report to be presented to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 5th October regarding the future of cashiering functions and in particular the Bargoed cash office.

The report stated that over 44,000 transactions are processed each year from that office and it was felt that should the facility close it would have a devastating effect on trade in the town centre. There was concern from representatives present that no consultation had taken place with the local ward members, the Chamber of Trade or officers from the Council's Business Advisory Services on any future proposal and that this group would be opposed to any closure of the Bargoed Cash Office.

It was agreed that the comments from this meeting be conveyed to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee prior to the meeting.

4. PRESENTATION ON BARGOED LIBRARY

Mr. Ed Green (Pentan Partnership) was attending the meeting to give a presentation on proposals for rear of the new Bargoed Library.

It was reported that work had now commenced on the building. The contents had been cleared and necessary structural work started.

It is a very prominent building in the town but the back is visually poor and in need of repair. Although funding has not been identified it was felt that plans to enhance the area at the rear of the building should be considered.

Mr. Green reported that there were presently two main issues at the rear of the building:-

- A very bleak urban landscape – predominately tarmac;
- A very uneven line from the domestic dwellings.

Three separate areas would be developed -

- the area to the rear of the building that the contractor is presently occupying during that work (area 1);
- the connection space leading to the main street (area 2);
- the area that would join area 1 and 2 together (area 3).

The emphasis of the proposals is on pedestrians and not predominately vehicles.

For Phase 1 an urban space would connect directly to the new library and a similar flexible space outside would be below ground level and have seating in an amphitheatre setting. The view from the library would not then be of vehicles.

There would be an attempt however not to lose too many car parking spaces and the proposal for phase 1 would reduce the number by 22 spaces. There would be disabled parking near the door to the library.

For Phase 2 the area would be illuminated with seating areas and a circular space with a landmark.

Phase 3 would have the parking spaces and green spaces with trees and landscaping.

Initial negotiations have been made with the adjoining landowners of the church to acquire land for additional parking and a better visual appearance.

The proposal would result in a loss of 22 spaces at the area immediately behind the building and an overall loss of 33 spaces if the whole area was redeveloped.

A question was raised on costs and it was confirmed that Phase 1 would cost approximately

£181k, phase2 £87k and phase 3 £72k.

A concern raised from Gwent Police in regard to the seating area which may attract youths congregating in the evenings. A response was given that unfortunately many developments would not proceed if this was a consideration and that also CCTV would be installed in the area.

Members supported the proposals in principle but raised a concern regarding finding the funding. Mr. Tanner reported however that there are a number of funding routes that can be explored.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Green for attending and giving the presentation.

5. MANAGING THE CHANGE

Mr. Tanner gave a progress report on a number of schemes that are progressing in the town centre.

- Work on the library is due for completion in September 2011. Space for parking and landscaping at the backs of the properties is being progressed through Heads of the Valleys funding.
- Public Realm Works – Phase 1 has started on the bus station and the steps to the small viewing square are due for completion in March.
- Negotiations are continuing on the proposed store on the new retail plateau. A considerable amount of complex legal agreements will need to be finalised before a planning application is submitted.

A concern was raised regarding the new retail store and the need to inform the public that this is still happening. It was agreed that an update on other developments should also be given to the public and Mr Highway indicated that he would discuss this with officers from Urban Renewal.

6. BARGOED BIG SCREEN

Mr. Hughes (Events and Marketing Officer) presented a report on the recent Bargoed Big Screen which was held on Friday 3rd September at Hanbury Road car park. The film chosen was Shrek in order to target young children and families.

The report gave details of the event and thanks were recorded to Communities First and all the volunteers who helped throughout the evening to make the event a success.

Unfortunately Hanbury Road car park will not be available for at least 12 months because of construction work to the chapel and an alternative venue will need to be identified.

A number of options were given in the report and the group considered that the High Street option would be the most suitable. It was also suggested that the screening be held on a Sunday evening to avoid problems with the traffic and shoppers when setting up.

7. BARGOED CHRISTMAS MARKET

Mr. Hughes reported that the Christmas market would be held on 18th December and it is proposed to operate an on-street market along the road, various street entertainers, a Lantern Parade, Santa's Grotto and a firework display. It is hoped that 20/30 stalls would be at the event and it was agreed that a road closure with stalls on Upper High Street would be the most suitable.

It was confirmed that a Safety Advisory Group would however be involved in the planning of the event and the Police consulted on any possible venues.

It was agreed that a discount book for the day be investigated and retail premises encouraged to participate.

Members endorsed the suggestion of an ice rink for the Christmas season and considered that this facility would be a unique attraction for the town.

8. TRAFFIC ANALYSIS IN BARGOED PRE AND POST OPENING OF ANGEL WAY

Mr. Campbell introduced the report and explained that the new highway layout was operating successfully and that traffic flows and traffic patterns were working well since the new Angel Way network and the introduction of a one way system on Hanbury Road and High Street.

The one-way system was to facilitate the wider regeneration scheme and a few issues should be resolved when the wider scheme is completed.

The one-way order was introduced in July and is valid for 18 months.

Mr. Campbell referred to 5.2 of the report which explained the concerns received although it was noted that very few issues have been reported and very little correspondence received.

Finally Mr. Campbell reported that the new highway network is operating well and that there appears to be no significant increase in traffic. It is therefore intended to make the one way order permanent as part of the wider regeneration project.

A number of concerns were reported from members of the group regarding speeding and vehicles travelling the wrong way although it was accepted that these might improve as drivers become more familiar with the changes.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

9. Retail Survey Presentation

Mr. Highway outlined the findings of a Town Centre Retail Survey. He explained the methodology and the results obtained. The questionnaire was distributed to 170 retailers and there was a response from 69. The biggest response was from independent retailers (44 responses)

The overall findings appear to indicate that although the majority of retailers are still experiencing falling sales, business optimism is increasing and there appears to be a more positive attitude amongst retailers about the future.

Two new questions were asked this year - if the retailers had a web site (40 responded that they did) and if they sold goods on line (only 24 responded that they did). There does appear to be a missed opportunity by some retailers to create a 24 hour shop window. Mr. Highway indicated that colleagues in Business Advisory Services would be exploring the options available to encourage retailers to have an on line presence.

The findings also indicated that the Town Centre News and Footfall Index continue to provide useful information to the retailers.

10. Environmental Audit

The Environmental Audit for September 2010 was received and noted.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 15th December at 2.00 pm (Sirhowy Room, Penallta House).

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm.