



BARGOED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE LIBRARY IN HANBURY CHAPEL ON WEDNESDAY, 7TH DECEMBER AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Carter - Chairman

Councillors:

H.A. Andrews, D.T. Davies, A.G. Higgs

Together with:

H. Llewellyn (Town Councillor), K. Halvey (Town Councillor), I. Hill (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), P. Collins (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), B. Jarrett (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), Inspector Huw Jones.

Also:

A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager) G. Richards (Highways Maintenance Manager), R. Tanner (Strategic Planning and Urban Renewal Manager), B. Morgan (Project Officer), S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager), J. Elliott (Research Officer) P. Hudson (Marketing and Events Manager), T. McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager), J. Dix (Policy & Research Manager), J. Coles (Griffiths Contractors).

APOLOGIES

Councillors Mrs D. Price (Vice Chair), R. Davies (Cabinet Member) and K. V. Reynolds, M. Lloyd (Highway Operations Group Manager), J. Bennett (Group Manager), J. Cooper (Local Resident), E. Saunders (Communities First Co-ordinator)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

2 OPENING ADDRESS

The Chair Councillor David Carter thanked Gareth Evans and the library staff for kindly hosting the meeting in the new library in Bargoed. Councillor Carter noted the library was both great for Bargoed and the further regeneration of the town centre.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the Bargoed Town Centre Management Group held on 13 October 2011 were agreed as a true record subject to the following amendments –

Page 2 – there was no band at the Rhymney Valley Town Centre Take over.

Page 4 – change ‘Cable Street’ to ‘Capel Street.’

4. SNOW AND ICE CLEARANCE

Gareth Richards (Highways Maintenance Manager) addressed the meeting. He informed that not much snow was anticipated for this winter. The Council now has six new snowploughs, three new gritters and 10,000 ton stock of salt. Pavement gritters have also been purchased, although it was noted that it was impossible for the cleansing department to grit all the pavements in Bargoed, and indeed the borough. The 800 salt bins in the borough are full. Mr. Richards referred members to the ‘Winter Service Plan 2011-12’, which was drafted in July 2011 to prepare for the winter.

The Committee noted that the winter experience last year in Bargoed was particular bad, especially with icy pavements for pedestrians. It was agreed that Mr Richards would meet with Councillor Carter on site in Bargoed to run through the winter preparations. The meeting was opened out for other members to attend if they so wished.

5. CHRISTMAS UPDATE

Mr Paul Hudson (Marketing and Events Manager) circulated various flyers advertising the Christmas events in Bargoed. The ice rink will be open between 15th to 18th December and located in St. Gwladys car park. To date there has been a slow update from local schools.

A Christmas Market will be held on 17th December between 10am to 4pm. It was noted that last year’s market was cancelled because of the snow.

Publicity of the events has included ‘Newline’ articles, flyers and a radio campaign on Capital FM.

Votes of thanks, moved by Mr Brian Jarrett (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), were given to the sponsorship received from Bargoed Town Council and Griffiths Contractors.

6. GO2BARGOED

Mr Steve Morgan (Grants & IT Project Manager) informed the committee of work being undertaken to develop the IT capacity of local businesses. A digital business network has been created for Bargoed resulting in ethical search for business in the Caerphilly borough business portal so boosting visibility on line. Go2Bargoed puts business in front of customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and can be found at www.go2bargoed.co.uk

To help businesses get on line GO2 is offering:

- A free entry on Go2 for local businesses
- Up to 50% financial support towards the cost of a website
- Professional websites tailored to businesses
- A domain name and a secure hosting service
- Training in social media and managing websites

- Recycled computers for £100 fee, with half of this coming back to the business by way of a grant.
- Assistance to charities in developing websites.

Currently 70 local business are featured on the website. The scheme is funded through Heads of the Valleys funding. The same process of getting businesses on line is soon to be rolled out in Risca.

It was noted that this website was entirely different from the Bargoed Big Idea website. Mr. Morgan has recently attended a meeting with Google to discuss getting British business on line. Caerphilly CBC is the first local authority in Wales to have such a meeting with Google.

7. MORRISONS/SIMONS UPDATE

Mr. Roger Tanner (Strategic Planning and Urban Renewal Manager) informed all legal agreements are now in place. However, there are many conditions with third partners, such as Welsh Water. The target date for starting on site is mid January 2012. Mr. Tanner confirmed that Morrisons is still signed up to the development. Advertisement boards will be placed on site when the scheme is signed off in January.

Recently Mrs. Tina McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager) and Mrs. Jan Bennett (Group Manager) have met with Morrisons. It is envisaged that 280 jobs will come out of the Morrisons store when it opens in 2013. Pre-employment courses were discussed to build the capacity of local people to apply for the jobs.

Bargoed Town Centre councillors and the Chamber of Trade requested for a similar meeting to be set up for them with Morrisons to discuss local employability.

Councillor Tudor Davies asked for it to be recorded that officers have done an excellent job in getting this off the ground and this was endorsed by Mr. Jarrett (Bargoed Chamber of Trade).

8. RETAIL SURVEY

Mr. Highway circulated a report on the 'Town Centre Management Retail Survey 2011'. This is the third year that this survey has been done. The purpose of the survey is to give an indication of the level of optimism among retailers and to see if perceptions are improving.

Across the town centres the highest response rate came from Caerphilly at 33%. The other town centres surveyed were Risca (24% of respondents), Blackwood (22% of respondents) and Bargoed (21% of respondents). Overall the survey found:

- Retail sales are falling less than in 2010, with many businesses seeing steady sales;
- Business optimism continues to grow for the second year in a row;
- Town Centre Management circulars continued to be valued by retailers;
- More businesses have an online presence, but only 30% trade online.

Mr. Highway stressed the importance of retailers having a transactional web site to meet the growing demand created by people using smart phones.

9. ROAD AND URBAN REALM UPDATES

Mr. John Coles (Griffiths Contractors) circulated a newsletter on phase 2 of High Street North. The planting of trees at Royal Square was noted.

The weekend road closures have proved useful in getting the work done. Mr Coles thanked the committee for agreeing to weekend road closures. Mr Coles also gave thanks to the Project Team for their excellent work in progressing this redevelopment.

Mr. Coles noted the community benefits that have been generated through the works, such as: the employability of local people; donations to the Mayor's Charity; contribution to ice rink in Bargoed and the cenotaph in Aberbargoed among other community benefits.

Phase 2 will be finished January 2012. Phase 3 works will be out to tender before Christmas. Councillor Carter (Chair) asked for Mr. Tanner to bring the chosen contractor to the next Bargoed Town Centre Meeting.

Mr. Jarrett raised disquiet at night works of three weeks duration for phase 3 and informed he had sent an email to key councillors and officers on this. Mr. Tanner said he would explore whether the proposed road closure can be avoided.

Mr. Tanner informed more road closures were likely, such as for sewerage works outside the Hanbury Arms.

10. BARGOED TOWN CENTRE AUDIT

Page 4 – Post Office box on Pier Head still blocked.

Page 5 – shrubs have been uprooted but have now been replaced.

Page 6 – no further problems with steps on Cardiff Road.

Mr. Jarrett asked if the car parking charges, which have been suspended over Christmas, could be suspended until all the work is completed. Mr. Highway commented he has raised this in the past with Mr. Clive Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager) who said he could not concede to the request.

Mr. Jarrett asked the meeting to support a request to have free car parking in all town centre car parks for the entire duration of the regeneration scheme to be made again to Clive Campbell and this was endorsed by the committee.

The meeting closed at 3:55 p.m.