



BARGOED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT TREDOMEN BUSINESS CENTRE ON THURSDAY, 8TH MARCH 2012 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Carter - Chairman

Councillors:

H.A Andrews, A.G. Higgs, Mrs D. Price, K.V. Reynolds

Together with:

J. Morgan (Town Councillor), H. Llewellyn (Town Councillor), V.A. Button (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), B. Jarrett (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), J. Cooper (Local Resident), H.R. Jones (Heddlu Gwent Police), K.W. (Traffic Warden)

Also:

G. Howell (Capita Symonds), A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), B. Morgan (Project Officer), P. Hudson (Marketing and Events Manager), G. Evans (Senior Manager, Education & Leisure), S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager), J. Elliott (Research Officer), L. Hughes (Communities First Co-ordinator), A. Jones (Complaints Officer), J. Dix (Policy & Research Manager).

APOLOGIES

Cllr. R. Davies, J. Bennett (Group Manager, Business, Enterprise & Support), Inspector Jones (Bargoed), D. Collins (Bargoed Chamber of Trade), P. Collins (Bargoed Chamber of Trade).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

2. OPENING ADDRESS

The chair welcomed back Mr. John Cooper to the committee after a period of absence.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the Town Centre Management Group held on 7 December 2011 were agreed as a true record subject to the following amendments:-

Page 1 – Cllr K.V. Reynolds was present at the meeting of 7th December 2012 and was wrongly recorded as absent.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Page 2 – Bargoed BIG Idea Website: It was reported that updates had recently been made to this website including the insertion of images on Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, and phase 2 of the retail plateau, *Morrisons*, and offices above the former *Woolworths*.

Page 4 – Road Closures: It was reported that these would be restricted to the weekend.

4(a) FREE PARKING REQUEST FROM CHAMBER OF TRADE

Mr. Clive Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager) reported that officers are in the process of developing a parking strategy in Bargoed with control mechanisms. Mr. Brian Jarrett (Bargoed Chamber of Trade) request for free parking on the behalf of traders was made because it was felt that the North of the town is disadvantaged compared to the South of the town, which will benefit from free parking when *Morrisons* opens. Mr. Jarrett confirmed the request for free parking was for parking to be provided permanently for free, and not just in the town centre improvement stages.

Mr. Campbell informed that the request for the principle of free parking could not be supported for a number of reasons. Free parking was likely to be taken up on a first come first served basis accommodating people working in the locality rather than potential customers. In the climate of economic recession such a request could prove detrimental to local trading. The principle would also be difficult to control, and any enforcement would have cost implications. It was noted there was a free park and ride facility at Bargoed railway station, and it was queried whether there could be some trade off with charges being made for travellers taking up this option. However, the committee was informed this would not be possible on the basis of wider environmental and sustainability issues.

Mr. Campbell reported that CCBC had been monitoring the usage of car parks, which has shown generally free availability for parking in Hanbury Road. The timescales for the new parking and control strategy are within the next two months. The Chair requested that this is an agenda item for the next Bargoed Town Centre management Group meeting on 7th June 2012. The Committee asked for the new parking and control strategy to take into consideration the request for permanent free parking.

4(b) SPRING FAIR

Mr Paul Hudson (Marketing and Events Manager) circulated details on the Bargoed Spring Fair Saturday, 31st March 2012, being held at the Emporium car park. Previously the event has been held in Hanbury Road and it was suggested that the move to the Emporium car park should be made permanent. The event consists of craft stalls, circus skills workshops, face painting, Eclipse & Faerie Rainbow street entertainers, a steam train and a Punch & Judy Show. The free event starts on Friday, 30th March with the Bargoed Open Air Cinema showcasing *Alvin and the Chipmunks – Chipwrecked*. It was noted that volunteers for stewarding at the event would be welcome.

The Chair requested that the area be adequately cleansed before the start of the 2-day event.

The Chair gave thanks for the recent St. David's Day school celebrations in the town centre. The town centre council requested to be involved in plans for similar events in 2013.

4(c) JOBS BARGOED TOWN CENTRE

Mr Highway introduced his report to the committee, which provides information on the number of jobs created and lost in Bargoed town centre throughout 2011. He commenced by looking at the UK retail overview in 2011 which was marked by poor weather conditions over two weeks affecting Christmas trading. This was impacted by the Government introducing austerity measures resulting in job losses and wage freezers across both the private and public sector. In Wales consumer confidence was shaken with a 9.2% drop in footfall across Wales.

In Bargoed retailer confidence has remained positive due to the immense changes as the different strands of the 'BIG Idea' regeneration project have progressed. Significantly the council secured the *Original Factory Shop* as a tenant for the former *Woolworths* site occupying an important place on the high street as 'the big shop in a small town.' In 2011, 9 businesses opened in Bargoed compared to 8 in 2010, with 2 businesses closing, compared to 8 in 2010.

Mr. Highway commended the report to the committee and thanked Mr. Wilcox for all his hard work in the town centre.

4(d) WHEELCHAIR ACCESS AT BARGOED LIBRARY

Mr. Gareth Evans (Senior Manager, Education & Leisure) informed the council's disability discrimination officer had been looking at the issue of wheelchair access at the library. It is not possible for wheelchair users to access the gallery so it has now been put in place for staff to bring down requested books to people using wheelchairs. To make the gallery Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant it will involve removing all the shelving in the gallery area.

4(e) BARGOED MARKET

Mr. Highway informed that two retailers – *Pretty Women* and *Natalie's*, had asked for the introduction of a street market in Bargoed. While it is not feasible to consider a full road closure three possible areas have been identified as locations (map circulated to the committee). Interest had been expressed by a market operator from Carmarthenshire who meet CCBC officers on site in Bargoed on 29th February. Due to the use of ERDF monies to fund the regeneration works officers need to clarify the situation over state aid. Guidance on this matter is still being sought. An initial trial period of 6 months was been considered by officers subject to the support of the TCMG. Mr. Highway put the following motion to the committee:-

Does the Town Centre Management Group support the introduction of a street market into Bargoed town centre?

Mr. B. Jarrett informed of a survey of traders undertaken of traders which 22 responses were received in favour of the street market, and none negative.

Cllr. Reynolds questioned whether a decision should wait until all the improvement works had been undertaken. The Chair commented he was in favour of going ahead with the market now until next June, given this will be a period of time when no improvements works will be undertaken.

All the committee members with voting rights were in agreement with the motion (note no officers have voting rights). The Police noted they were neutral to the motion and were concerned there could be increased crime with more people coming in for the market. The motion was unanimously carried, with no objections raised.

4(f) MORRISONS UPDATE

Mr. B. Morgan informed that from the 12th March a Knotweed programme would start and the construction of a temporary car park by the new health centre commence. At this time it was hope for Symonds to have a base in the town to enable the public to ask questions on the development. From 6th August 2012 a section of Hanbury Road would be closed for 5 days (Monday to Friday) for constructing a chamber in the middle of the carriageway for utilities.

4(g) STAGES 3 & 4 PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

Mr Gareth Howell (Capita Symonds) showed the committee the stages 3 & 4 public realm improvement plans. The plans were placed at the back of the room for members to look at in detail following the meeting, and discuss with Mr. Howell.

Mr. Howell informed work was currently out to tender and the return date, following the request from organisations tendered, the tender period was being extended to 13th April 2012. The award for construction would be made on 11th May 2012, with the construction start date on Mid July 2012 running through to May 2012 for completion. A blanket weekend road closure is being included in the tender specification for the 10-month construction period.

The committee was informed there would be a puffin control crossing constructed by the Police Station, and a zebra crossing near the Post Office, and a number of uncontrolled crossings will be created.

4(h) BARGOED RETAIL PLATEAU PHASE 2

The committee were informed that expressions of interest were going out to all cinema operators next week. Artists are currently working on angels for the Emporium feature artwork.

A meet the buyer event was recently held by Symonds the developers which Bargoed Chamber of Trade noted was most successful being well attended and well received.

The committee were informed that construction on *Morrisons* would commence on 23rd October 2012.

5. AUDIT

Mr. Highway informed the retail plateau development (page 1 of audit) is now closed, with a new item being added for the cinema procurement and construction, and for the *Morrisons* development.

The power washing brickwork at St. Gwladys (page 1 of audit) was reported as done.

Two options were put forward for the Bargoed Chamber of Trade to consider for phase 2 works on Upper High Street and Lower High Street:

- Option 1: 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th December 2012
- Option 2: 22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th November 2012

Two options were put forward for the Bargoed Chamber of Trade to consider for the Christmas event, with ice rink possibly coinciding with switching on of Christmas lights:

- Option 1: 24th November 2012
- Option 2: 15th December 2012

Fencing at train station (page 4 of audit) has been looked at and considered to be of no danger to highway users. Comments were made at how ascetically it appears a mess. Mr. Jarrett said he would item it at the following Monday's Chamber of Trade meeting. The Chair requested officers to bring costings to the next committee meeting on improving the landscape appearance at the railway station around the fencing.

The meeting closed at 3:40 p.m. with the Chair reminding members to look at the art work the stages 3 & 4 public realm improvement plans.