

BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 30TH JUNE 2005

SUBJECT: ALLOCATION OF COMMUNITY FORUM FUNDING

REPORT BY: ANDREW HIGHWAY TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information on the proposal to allocate funding from the Community Forum budgets allocation to the Blackwood Town Centre Management Group, to assist with the cost of erecting 30 banners in High Street Blackwood.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Town Centre Development Manager is seeking to introduce 30 lamppost-mounted banners in order to promote and enhance Blackwood Town Centre.

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 The image that a Town Centre projects is vital in retaining not only its existing customers but also in attracting new visitors. Today's consumer is looking for a quality shopping experience and the environment in which people shop has become increasingly important. New standards in shopping centres across the UK have raised people's expectations and the traditional High Street offer is now viewed as tired and in need of change. This rise in expectations has to be balanced against current national concerns about what has become known as the 'Cloned High Street'. The term identifies an increasing trend across Britain's Town Centres where national retail chain stores take such a prominence within the High Street that a town's individual identity is lost.
- 3.2 Blackwood Town Centre currently has a good mix of traditional local independent traders and national High Street names including; Argos, Wilkinson's, Bon Marche and New Look. Therefore the promotion of the town must be in a context that adds to its character and successfully maintains the balances between the two different elements of the towns shopping offer.
- 3.3 The introduction of banners is a relatively cost effective way to change the feel of the High Street without altering its core character. A successful example of this can be seen locally in Caerphilly. The nature of a banner as a temporary display gives an opportunity to change the design; colour and message at regular intervals, giving the town a vibrant new look. In addition there is a possibility to use banners not only to theme the street but also to promote a specific local event, such as the 'Big Balloon'.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An audit of the Town Centre has shown that there are 30 lampposts in High Street, which could be utilised to display banners.

- 5.2 The banners require a 'Bannerflex' system of brackets and buckles to fix them to the lamppost columns. The cost of purchasing 30 sets of brackets and buckles is estimated at £1,850, this cost will be met from the Town Centre Management marketing budget.
- 5.3 The cost of designing and producing 30 sets of double-sided banners on the required material (780gsm reinforced banner grade PVC blackout) is estimated to be £2,100. The installation cost of each individual banner is estimated to be £1,450. The existing allocation of funding for the Town Centre Management marketing budget does not have provision within it to meet these costs.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 Installation and logistical advice has been provided by the council's Street Lighting engineers.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The current Community Forum budget allocation for the Blackwood Town Centre Management Group is £8,185. It is proposed to ask the group to agree to allow £3,550 from this fund to be used towards the cost of producing and installing 30 banners for display in High Street Blackwood. The content of the banner will contain a message to promote the Town Centre, the design will use colour to visually enhance the Town Centres offer.

Author: Andrew Highway, Town Centre Development Manager
Consultees: David Denner, Senior Engineer - Street Lighting

Background Papers: None