



## **BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUCIL OFFICES, PONTLLANFRAITH  
ON THURSDAY, 27TH JULY 2006 AT 4.00 PM**

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PRESENT:

Councillor L. Gardiner - Chairman

Together with:

I. MacVicar (Business Development Officer), C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), J. Rogers (Senior Solicitor), S. Smith (Senior Assistant Engineer), E. Gibbs (Principal Engineer – North), J. Elliott (Research Officer) and D. Phillips (Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Ms J. Morgan and Mr R. Wiseman (Blackwood Traders Association)  
Mrs E. Mantle and Mr I. Palmer (Blackwood Town Council)  
PC C. Hughes and Inspector Fleming (Heddlu Gwent Police)  
Mrs P. Thomas (Licensed Trade)  
Messrs C. Sharpe and J. Organ (Local Residents)

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Etheridge and N. Dix, Mr C, Kearns (Blackwood Shopping Precinct), Mrs B. Edwards (Blackwood Chamber of Trade) and Mr P. Lambert (Local Business).

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

### **2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the following minutes be approved as correct records and signed by the chairman.

Blackwood Town Centre Management Group held on 27th April 2006.

### **3. OFF STREET CAR PARKING PROVISION IN BLACKWOOD**

Mr Clive Campbell, Transportation Engineering Manager, introduced the report to the Management Group. He explained that the report had been prepared following a request from

the Blackwood Traders Association to implement free car parking in the High Street and Bus Station council controlled car parks until December 2006 when bus services return back to the bus station from the High Street.

The report considered three options and evaluated evidence to determine if the Blackwood Traders Association could be allowed:-

- Free parking in the council's High Street and Bus Station car parks with no enforcement.
- Free/reduced cost parking in the Council's High Street and Bus Station car parks with the current time restrictions applied and enforced.
- Free parking in the council's High Street and Bus Station car parks with new time restrictions applied and enforced.

Mr Campbell reported that a copy of electronic correspondence with Councillor Etheridge on this issue has been circulated to all members of the group.

In summary Mr Campbell concluded that there appeared to be no evidence to demonstrate that the work to the bus station had resulted in a negative impact on shoppers. There was also a danger of setting a precedent for similar concessions in other town centre car parks should future works be carried out. Finally the report concluded that given the timescale required to implement a proposal, any action may not achieve any appreciable benefit.

A representative from the Blackwood Traders Association expressed concern that evidence regarding loss of trade had not been requested from the Association when evaluating the situation. In addition a questionnaire to local traders had been circulated by them and with the exception of only two had been returned with negative comments about recent trade and also reporting that some traders had reduced their staffing levels. The Association considered that a short term gesture from the council for reduced or free parking in the centre would help local businesses.

Mr Campbell replied that it was a statement of fact that no evidence had been submitted but acknowledged that none had been requested. The claim that members of Blackwood Traders Association were experiencing trading losses was not in doubt or a key factor in the decision. It was considered that introducing free parking would not address the Traders concerns given that current use of the car parks had remained stable and that spaces are generally available to the public.

A member of the group suggested that certain car parks could provide parking free for the first hour which may increase trade in the town and also give an opportunity to monitor the situation for a limited period.

Officers responded to the comments raised and reminded the group that anecdotal evidence had suggested that trade on the High Street had improved and that also usage and income for car parks had remained stable in Blackwood. The Group were also reminded that traders would also be able to apply for a deferral of their business rates.

Mr Campbell reported that he had noted the concerns raised and would endeavour to raise the issue at a Special Regeneration Scrutiny meeting later in the day.

#### **4. ENFORCEMENT OF PARKING ON HIGH STREET, BLACKWOOD**

Mr Campbell reported that he had recently met with Inspector Fleming and PC Hughes to discuss parking enforcement issues on High Street, Blackwood with particular regard to Blue Badge holders parking in the loading bays. Inspector Fleming reported that previously too much discretion had been used but that officers had now been instructed to try to move vehicles within 5 minutes and if not able, will issue a parking ticket. Since April over 150 tickets had been issued with fixed parking tickets and in addition measures are being taken to try to increase staff resources on Fridays when illegal parking problems are higher.

**5. TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES**

Mr Stewart Smith, Senior Assistant Engineer, reported that the 'raised table road calming measures' in the Town Centre were too severe and the contractor would shortly be making design changes and carrying out improvements.

**6. BUS STATION – PROGRESS**

Mr Smith reported that the steel work had now been erected at the bus station and regular meetings with the contractor had indicated that the buses will return to the station site in December.

**7. PUBLIC ARTWORK – UPDATE**

The Management Group received a report outlining the current position on public artwork in the Blackwood Town Centre. The report gave details of Phase 1 of the Arts Strategy which is now being implemented. Details and photographs showing the Ring of Eternity, Tower of Hands and the Singing Tree were included in the report. Pieces for Phase 2 of the Artwork Strategy Implementation programme have been commissioned and will be presented to the management group at a future meeting.

A member requested funding details for the artwork and Mr Highway, Town Centre Development Officer, indicated that he would obtain the information and forward the details.

**8. CEFN ROAD TRAFFIC ORDER**

It was noted that that the statutory notice for the closure of the road had been issued. Responses will be considered following the closing date for responses on 4th August.

**9. ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT**

The Environmental Audit for Blackwood Town Centre was received and noted.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting of the Management Group had been arranged for 23rd November 2006. However it was agreed that a Special meeting be convened prior to that date as new Traffic Orders would need to be discussed.

The meeting closed at 4.55 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN