



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PONTLLANFRAITH ON THURSDAY, 10TH MAY 2007 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Gardiner - Chairman

Councillor N.S. Dix

Councillor D.T. Davies – Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Together with:

I. MacVicar (Business Development Officer), S. Smith (Senior Assistant Engineer), R. Campbell (Senior Assistant Engineer) A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager) J. Elliot (Research Officer), G. Thomas (Community Safety Control Room Manager), P. Hudson (Assistant Tourism Officer), T. White (Refuse and Cleansing Officer) and D. Phillips (Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Mr T. Jackson (Manager – Asda Stores)

Mrs E. Mantle, (Blackwood Town Council)

Mr P Lambert (Local Business)

Messrs C. Sharp and J. Organ and Ms D. Davies (Local Residents)

Inspector M. Fleming and PC C. Hughes (Gwent Police)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from A. Dallimore (Team Leader – Urban Renewal) J. Rogers (Principal Solicitor) and C. Cook (Access Group).

WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Ms Davies (Local Resident) and Mr Jackson (Manager Asda Stores) to their first meeting of the Management Group.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the following minutes be approved as a correct record: -

Blackwood Town Centre Management Group held on 15th February 2007.

MATTERS ARISING

3. Blackwood Public Artwork Strategy (Minute No 4)

Mr Lambert raised a question on the timescales for installing the artwork trail and Mr MacVicar indicated that he would contact the officer responsible for further details and give an update direct to Mr Lambert.

4. Update on Multi Agency Problem Solving Group – Barrier at Cliff Road (Minute No 5)

It was noted that there were still concerns that a barrier was not regularly being lowered at the Cliff Road car park in the evenings. The representative from the Police indicated that he had spoken to the Manager of the retail premises and he had agreed that the barrier be lowered when the premises were closed. He confirmed however that he had on a number of occasions lowered the barrier himself but would speak to the Manager again about this issue.

5. Environmental Audit – Public Conveniences

Mr White confirmed that following a report to Cabinet on public convenience provision in the county borough, it had been agreed that the unmanned toilets at High Street be closed as there would shortly be alternative manned conveniences at the new bus interchange.

6. BLACKWOOD CHARTIST FAIR

Mr Hudson circulated leaflets and gave a short presentation on preparations for the Blackwood Chartist Fair. He reported that arrangements had been made for a continental market, funfair and craft fair to be in the town on the Chartist Fair Week-end (8th and 9th June). There would also be a number of costume actors depicting the Chartist era with other street entertainers such as jugglers and fire-eaters. The Fair will be located along the length of Blackwood High Street and the street will be closed to traffic during the event. An open top bus will operate to the event from a temporary park & ride location at the southern retail park (an empty retail premises near Focus store) and additional temporary toilet facilities will be provided in the town centre. Mr Jackson indicated that he would display the leaflets at his store and welcomed the park and ride facility as there was only limited parking at his stores car park.

Members gave their appreciation to Mr Hudson for his work in organising the event.

7. BLACKWOOD INTERCHANGE

Mr Smith reported that the Blackwood Bus Interchange had now opened and all the buses from the High Street had relocated there. Some minor works still need to be completed on the toilets and waiting area and it is hoped that a tenant will be in the café in June.

It was suggested that the High Street should be cleaned where the buses were previously based and an officer indicated that this comment would be passed to the appropriate officer.

A concern was raised on the old carriageway lines which are still visible on High Street and Mr Campbell responded that a contractor will be painting lines on High Street this Sunday (weather permitting).

Mr Smith confirmed that a formal opening of the Interchange had not yet been arranged but that he would shortly be consulting with the communications unit of the council to progress the matter.

8. TRAFFIC MOVEMENT – SOUTHERN RETAIL PARK

Members discussed the new traffic restrictions currently banning right and u-turns towards Penmaen Road from the Southern Development site and the possibility of the developer building an island to support the restriction. Mr MacVicar indicated that he would examine any planning conditions attached to the development. It was also noted that the temporary park and ride facility for the Chartist Fair would need to take care to adhere to the new traffic flow. A question was raised on the proposed pedestrian scheme to link the retail park with the town centre and further information from officers will be provided on this matter.

9. UPDATE ON WORK OF MULTI AGENCY PROBLEM SOLVING GROUP

The representatives from the Police gave an update on the measures being taken to resolve the ongoing problems with the car cruisers on the High Street. It was noted that the multi agency problem solving group had agreed on a 4 phased solution ie. Education, Zero Tolerance, Dispersal Notice and finally shutting the High Street from 7pm to 4am. The first 2 initiatives seemed to have been successful - 400 fines had been issued and during the winter months the problems had reduced. However recently the problems seemed to have returned and although the speed bumps have been installed the slow traffic movement from the number of cars driving up and down the High Street has caused traffic jams. A further problem is the noise from the large bore exhausts and although the police had made contact with a number of insurance companies the modifications to the cars are generally acceptable. The problem solving group has representatives from the Police (traffic), officers of the council, elected members and Blackwood Neighbourhood Team and has good support from the retailers and the CCTV unit. It was noted that the CCTV unit report on average 10 items a week to the police to ensure public safety is controlled. (they do not deal with speeding offences).

A concern was raised regarding the High Street car park and incidents of damage with cars driving through the fence and it was noted that all such incidents should be reported to the Police. It was reported that some of the vehicles exiting the car park at Hall Street are using excessive speed and a suggestion was made to install speed bumps. It was agreed that this item would be included on the Town Centre Improvement Audit.

Mr Jackson reported that his store (Asda) would be applying to open 24hours a day from June And that he had worked closely with the police to ensure that measures are in place to prevent any further problems at the stores car park because of the extended hours. He had also been progressing the appointment of an uniformed security guard for the car park between 8-10pm.

Members of the Management Group placed on record their appreciation to the Police for all their work on this problem.

10. BLACKWOOD – DEFINING THE FUTURE

Mr Highway played a promotion CD (Blackwood – Defining the Future) illustrating the appeal of the Town Centre for investors. He circulated copies and reported that over 1,000 had already been circulated to potential investors/retailers. The aim is to raise the profile of the town.

INFORMATION ITEMS

11. Unauthorised Use of Car Park – Council Offices, Pontllanfraith

The Management Group noted a letter from Mr Wright regarding unauthorised use of the car park at the Council Offices, Pontllanfraith and a proposal to install bollards to prevent access after 7pm. Members discussed the proposal and the expressed concern regarding possible restricted access to the children’s playground and the social club. They did however feel that if the bollards were not positioned near the entrance the medical centre car park may be misused.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

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

MATTERS ARISING

13. Tables and Chairs on the Highway – Hall Street OS Colors Bar

It was noted from the Audit that the owner of Colors bar had applied to create a seating area outside the premises and that this was presently being considered. The area would be clearly defined, well controlled and well monitored. Mr Campbell reported that he had consulted widely and had received no adverse comments to the proposal although there was a concern from Environmental Health that an alcohol ban currently exists on Hall Road. A local resident expressed concern regarding noise from this particular premises on a Thursday and Friday evenings and this would be investigated by the appropriate officer.

Finally, although every application will be considered on it’s own merits, a number of premises had made unsuccessful enquiries regarding outdoor seating areas because a minimum footpath width of 2.5m must be available as stated in the council’s retail trading/displays on pavements policy.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 26th July at 4.30pm the Council Offices, Pontllanfraith.

The meeting closed at 6.15p.m.

CHAIRMAN