



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PONTLLANFRAITH ON WEDNESDAY 4TH JUNE 2008 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Mrs. K. Presley, K, Smallman and K. Etheridge

Together with:

I. MacVicar (Business Development Officer), M. Williams (Head of Public Services), R. Tanner (Strategic Planning & Urban Renewal Manager), T. White (Refuse & Cleansing Officer), R. Campbell (Senior Assistant Engineer) A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), J. Elliott (Research Officer) and D. Phillips (Partnership Support Officer).

Also Present:

Messrs C.Sharp and J.Organ and Ms D.Davies (Local Residents).
D. Jones and A. Farina-Childs (Blackwood Town Council), J. Hold (Clerk- Blackwood Town Council).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R.Davies (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Countryside), Mr P.Lambert (Local Business) and Mrs B.Edwards (Blackwood Chamber of Trade) Town Councillor L.Thomas and A.Dallimore (Team Leader – Urban Renewal).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the start of the meeting. A declaration of interest was made however by Councillor Mrs Presley during the discussion of the retail development.

2. CHAIRMAN / VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor K. Smallman was elected as Chairman and Town Councillor Darren Jones elected as Vice- Chairman of the Management Group.

The newly appointed Chairman thanked members for nominating him and welcomed new members to the Group.

3. MINUTES

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

Blackwood Town Centre Management Group held on 27th February 2008.

MATTERS ARISING

4. Experimental Closure Proposal for High Street, Blackwood (Minute No 6)

It was reported that a recent meeting had been held with the Transportation Engineering Manager, local ward members and the Police to discuss the closure proposal and that notes of this meeting have now been made available. A concern was raised however by a local member that he is still against any closure proposal because he still has reservations regarding the Police having sufficient resources to deal with any temporary closure.

A Town Councillor also reported that he had requested information at a recent PACT meeting regarding infrastructure/operational details of any closure but had to date not received any details.

It was suggested that full consultation would need to include all local residents who may be affected by any temporary closure.

It was noted that a public meeting discussed at the previous Management Group meeting had not been held because of local elections and it was suggested that before this is considered again a further meeting with local members, the Town Council, Police and the local authority should be convened.

5. ITEMS SUBMITTED BY BLACKWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

The following items were submitted by the Town Council:

6. Disabled Parking Provision

Members noted the report at Appendix 1 outlining the concern of the Town Council on the availability of disabled parking spaces within the town centre and requesting that consideration be given to re designate spaces at the southern end of High Street into disabled only parking bays.

Mr Robert Campbell, Senior Assistant Engineer, explained the history regarding the review of the new traffic orders, which have been in existence in the town since April last year. He also outlined the number of spaces and explained that when they were reviewed consideration was given to all users including the traders for deliveries to their premises and that decisions had not been taken in isolation, as every one would have an impact on another user. A member stated however that he considered the number of disabled parking spaces at the south of the town were inadequate for the number of disabled drivers and that the additional spaces provided at Woodbine Road were on a steep incline and did not have dropped kerbs for wheelchair users.

It was suggested that a formal letter regarding the dropped kerb could be submitted to the council and that the general parking concerns in the High Street may be addressed by the Consultants (Powell Dobson) who would be including traffic flows and the impact of traffic passing through the High Street in their study of the Town Centre. Members were reminded that the consultants would welcome views/suggestions at the appropriate time.

During discussion of this item the abuse by disabled badge holders was also discussed and Mr Highway reported that he has a report outlining tighter measures, which are currently being considered by the Government to control abuse of the disabled blue badge (e.g. hologram and gender specific serial numbers on the badge).

7. Former Public Conveniences – High Street, Blackwood

Mr Williams, Head of Public Services, gave a response to a concern regarding the recent closure of the public conveniences at High Street. He explained that a report was presented to the Living Environment Scrutiny in January 2007 and a decision subsequently made by Cabinet in February 2007 to rationalise public convenience provision. A decision was taken to close the toilets at High Street as they were unmanned, subject to vandalism and anti social behaviour and would be very expensive and virtually impossible to upgrade to comply to DDA standards. He also reported that very few complaints had been received following the closure of these toilets and that the earlier problems regarding the lunch time closure at the Bus Interchange had now been resolved so these were now available all day.

Members of the Group expressed concern that a thriving town should have more than one toilet facility and that a number of complaints on this issue had been received by members of the public in the town.

During discussion of the DDA compliance a Town Councillor reported that he had information regarding the regulations should another DDA facility be nearby and Mr White indicated that he would be grateful if this information could be forwarded to him.

The present marketing situation of the premises and the cost of re-opening the toilets was also discussed.

It was agreed that a request be submitted to The Living Environment Scrutiny Committee /Cabinet requesting them to reconsider the closure of the public conveniences at High Street.

8. Update On Proposal for Retail Development

Councillor Mrs Presley declared an interest in the item because she is a member of the Planning Committee. She left the meeting during the discussion.

The Town Council as a statutory consultee had received a copy of the application and had been requested to give comments on the proposed retail development site before 17th June. However as a public exhibition is being held on 30th June they were advised to contact the appropriate officer in the planning department to request that they delay their comments until after the public views are gauged.

9. Additional Representation on the Management Group

A request had been received from Blackwood Town Council for an additional two representatives to be included on the membership of the Management Group.

It was agreed that as the Town Council already has three representatives, the request for an additional two would be granted subject to them joining as ex-officio members without voting rights.

The Town Clerk will forward the names and addresses to the Partnership Support Officer.

10. BLACKWOOD STUDY – THE WAY FORWARD

In the absence of Mr Dallimore who had written the report, Mr Tanner outlined the report giving details of a commissioned study which will be used to aid the wider regeneration of

Blackwood Town.

The consultants appointed are Powell Dobson and an aim of their study would be to identify routes of economic fortunes through employment and leisure facilities but also taking a balance of transportation and pedestrian issues. They will provide a balanced way forward to guide developments over the forthcoming years.

The programme will be staged into seven stages – the first to be an exhibition in the Foyer of Asda store. A postal survey will be sent to local traders and at a later stage they will meet stakeholders. The final report would possibly be presented to council in the Autumn. It was suggested that a copy of the questionnaire to traders should be made available to members of the Group and that consideration be given to interviewing a number 'face to face'. Mr Highway confirmed that he had provided a list of contacts for retailers who would agree to be interviewed and also confirmed that many of the traders had now received a questionnaire. Also when the design brief is available officers should consider consultation with the Town Council and the Management Group.

Thanks were recorded to Mr Dallimore for his work in progressing the study.

11. Blackwood Town Centre Audit – May 2008

The following points were raised from the Town Centre Improvement Group Audit:

Library Works – Blackwood Road (Page 5)

A local resident had suggested that the Chartist Statue should be positioned outside the library and not at the Chartist Bridge.

New Artwork Gravel lane /High Street (Page 8)

Details to be supplied to the Town Clerk

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

As no Police representative was available to attend the meeting it was suggested that they be invited to give a presentation to the next Management Group. The topics suggested for discussion would include:-

- An update on Pact meetings
- Police resourcing in the town
- The policing of the town
- Effectiveness and response rates
- Partnerships with community safety and wardens working together

Disappointment was expressed that the Blackwood Police Liaison Committee had been disbanded.

13. Dorothy Café

It was agreed that a letter be sent to Mr Lusardi with good wishes for his retirement from his business, the Dorothy Café in the High Street.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 24th July at 4.30 pm – Pontllanfraith Council Chamber.

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm.
