



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PONTLLANFRAITH
ON THURSDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 4.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor K. Smallman – Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs K. Presley and K. Etheridge

Messrs C. Sharp and J. Organ and Ms D. Davies (Local Residents), Mr P. Lambert (Local Business), D. Davies (Blackwood Town Council) and J. Hold (Clerk - Blackwood Town Council).

PC. K. Hughes.

Together with:

I. MacVicar (Business Development Officer), A. Dallimore (Urban Renewal Manager), A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), P. Hotchkiss (Registration/Licensing Officer), B. Campbell (Senior Assistant Engineer), J. Elliott (Research Officer) and D. Phillips (Partnership Support Officer).

Also Present:

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Davies (Cabinet Member) and Town Councillor A. Farina-Childs.

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 21st May 2009.

3. TOWN CENTRE RETAIL SURVEY

Mr Andrew Highway (Town Centre Development Manager) gave a power point presentation on the results of a recent retailers survey. A total of 150 surveys were sent out and 62 were

returned. The results of the survey will be used to indicate how the retailers view the recession, to understand how the retailers perceive their own future and to gauge the potential long- term impact of the recession on the high streets.

A number of questions were asked and the findings/conclusions of the survey were that :-

- All sectors of retail are experiencing a fall in sales.
- Retailers perceive that a number of factors are behind the recession.
- There is some fear over long-term job security.
- Retail is a happy sector to work in.

Mr Highway concluded by stating that town centres are unique places for people to visit and reconnect with their community.

4. UPDATE ON CAR CRUISERS

PC Carl Hughes reported that a new order which comes into effect from next Thursday (17th September) will allow the Police to close Blackwood High Street at night (from 7pm) in a bid to tackle the ongoing problems caused by 'car cruisers' in the town centre. For the first week an education event at the council offices car park (Pontllanfraith) will be held and a number of agencies will be present to talk to the drivers. They will also be allowed to drive once more through the town on that Thursday and then be encouraged to visit the event. For the first few weeks over 25 Police officers will be present and will be available to monitor any alternative routes that may be used by the cruisers. The car parks at McDonalds and KFC will be closed after 7pm and the Asda Car Park will be closely monitored by the security guard. There has been positive media coverage and the Chairman gave thanks to all the agencies involved in working together to try and find a solution to this long term problem. He also thanked the Police for their efforts and wished them a successful conclusion.

5. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

Mr Bob Campbell reported that he had recently sent drawings to the local ward members regarding a possible change to the regulations at the loading bay outside Bolwells (which is a currently a concern at it is a 'pinch' point on the High Street). A number of other suggestions were given by members and also Mr Highway suggested that there would also be a need to try and identify more short term parking on the High Street. Mr Lambert considered that the traffic regulations in the High Street needed to be reviewed as they were too complicated and many of them unnecessary and found signage on the High Street over-complicated.(e.g. many of the dedicated loading bays were unused in the mornings). To increase the number of shoppers there may be a need to improve the access to the town and provide free short term parking. It was reported that the new traffic warden had now issued a substantial amount of parking tickets. It was agreed that Mr Campbell prepare a report (to include de-cluttering of signage) after consulting all interested parties (Local members, the Police, Town Council and the Traffic Warden) and taking into account the comments raised at the meeting. Mr Dallimore reported that it was now unlikely that the recommendations for the High Street by the Consultants, Powell Dobson, would be implemented as the town had not been identified as one of 44 deprived towns eligible for European Convergence money.

A further comment was made on the inadequate signage for the no right turn into bridge street and also the inadequate signage to the main car park. Mr Highway indicated that this would be added to the Town Centre Audit.

6. LICENSING ACT – BUSKERS ON THE HIGH STREET

Mr Hotchkiss (Licensing Officer) was attending the meeting to discuss the measures available to the council to control the buskers on the High Street. He reported that although they are generally regarded as part of the street scene by the Government, it would be possible for the responsible directorate to submit an application for a premises licence for the High Street to regulate activities and then any entertainers would need to apply for a licence to perform. The Police representative reported that they had moved the busker when a complaint is received.

It was suggested that an officer meeting of all appropriate directorates could discuss the provision of the Licensing Act and determine if there is a willingness on behalf of the council to progress the matter further.

7. BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT GROUP AUDIT

The following items were discussed :

- a) **Southern Pedestrian Linkages – Town Centre (Page 2)** – Detailed plans drawn and approximate cost £13-15k. Unlikely to proceed at present because of lack of funding.
- b) **Broken Street Furniture (Page 4)** – Works completed.
- c) **Improvements Work Area Opposite Sirhowy Public House (Page 5)** - Installation of new bins and benches completed and area cleaned.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A concern was expressed regarding problems near the roundabout at the Asda end of the Town and Mr Highway indicated that he would add this item to the Town Centre Audit.

Copies of the publication 'Town Centres, Unique Places' were circulated to members.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 21st January 2010 at 4.30pm – Pontllanfraith Council Chamber

The meeting closed at 5.45pm