



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PONTLLANFRAITH ON THURSDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER 2009 AT 4.30 PM

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 and A. Farina-Childs (Blackwood Town Council) and J. Hold (Clerk - Blackwood Town Council).

Inspector K. Childs and PC.K. Hughes (Gwent Police).

Together with:

I. MacVicar (Business Development Officer), A. Dallimore (Urban Renewal Manager), A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), B. Campbell (Senior Assistant Engineer), J. Elliott (Research Officer) and D. Phillips (Partnership Support Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Davies (Cabinet Member) and C. Cook (Caerphilly Access Group).

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor K. Smallman declared an interest in agenda item 7 – Blackwood Street Pastor Scheme.

2. MINUTES

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

Blackwood Town Centre Management Group held on 10th September 2009.

3. CAR CRUISERS – VERBAL UPDATE

Inspector Childs outlined the progress on the temporary road closure of Blackwood High Street on Thursday evenings in order to deter the car cruisers situation.

He explained that on the first week of the closure (17th September) a very successful event at the council offices car park (Pontllanfraith) was held with a number of agencies present to talk to the displaced drivers.

Since the closure there has been no direct evidence of any alternative route or alternative evening been used by the car cruisers and telephone complaints from the public has fallen from approximately 20 to nil on a Thursday evening.

PC Hughes reported that a few minor operational problems had occurred but generally the public with very supportive of the closure. There is however concern from the local restaurants and food Takeaways that their businesses has suffered as a result of the road closure.

Mr. Highway reported however that the footfall figures on the High Street had increased from the previous year and that also a number of businesses were generally experiencing a fall in takings due to the recession. It was suggested that it might be beneficial to these businesses to include an article in the council's publication, Newslite, indicating the success of the road closure and reminding the public that although the High Street is closed on a Thursday evening all the venues for refreshments remain open for business. It was reported that although the closure order was for 2 years, the Police would be withdrawing their presence in March 2010 and a multi agency forum would be set up prior to this date in order to prepare for this withdrawal.

A local resident congratulated the Police on their work in dealing with the long standing problem of the car cruisers and gave thanks to Inspector Childs for his time and commitment to the operation.

It was agreed by all members that a letter be sent from the Group to Superintendent Jon Burley at Gwent Police expressing thanks for all the work of his officers involved (especially Inspector Childs) in the road closure operation.

4. AREA FORUM BUDGET AND STREET PASTOR SCHEME

Mr. Highway reported that £9,000 in the Area Forum Budget needed to be allocated to projects in the town centre. A number of schemes were put forward.

5. Barriers for High street Road Closure

As reported earlier in the meeting Gwent Police would be unable to continue indefinitely preventing the traffic from entering High Street on a Thursday evening and therefore a permanent solution needs to be found. Both Gwent Police and the council have considered various options and consider that hinged barrier gates would be the preferred option. The barriers would be erected at the town's northern and southern access points and would be able to display signage information informing drivers of the closure as well as providing a physical barrier (a diagram of a preferred barrier was circulated for information).

The Management Group endorsed the proposed hinged barrier gates and that £5,000 be allocated from the Area Forum Budget towards the cost of purchase and installation.

It was also agreed that consultation on the experimental road closure order would be held in the New Year and a report be given to the next meeting in February. Local ward members would be given delegated powers to commence appropriate discussion and consultation prior to this meeting.

A local member expressed thanks to Mr. Campbell and Mr. Highway for their assistance in preparations for the road closure.

6. Blackwood Town Centre Southern Entrance Feature

Mr. Dalimore also outlined proposals for a new sign for the southern gateway to incorporate a 'Welcome to Blackwood, a reference to the Twin Towns and a 'Defining the Future logo. Mr. Dallimore indicated that a local artist could be commissioned and firm costings then agreed. The estimated cost of the works was put at £8,000-£10,000.

The Management Group agreed that a contribution of £3,000 be given from the Area Forum Budget towards the Southern Entrance Feature and it was noted that the Blackwood Town Council have also indicated that they would also be willing to make a contribution.

7. Parish Nursing

Councillor K. Smallman declared an interest in this item as he is a member of Central Methodist church who were promoting the scheme.

Funding was also requested for the Parish Nursing initiative which has been set up to complement local health services (such as Blood pressure checks) and run by a full time qualified nurse.

It was agreed that a report be presented to the next meeting with more details regarding the amount requested and a business plan to illustrate where funding would be targeted.

Mr Hold reminded members that this initiative might also be able to apply for funding from Blackwood Town Council.

8. Blackwood Street Pastor Scheme

Councillor K. Smallman declared an interest in this item as he is a member of the Central Methodist church who are participating in the scheme

Mrs Susan Phillips had been invited to attend to meeting as a representative from the Blackwood Street Pastor scheme which is currently operating in Blackwood Town Centre on a Friday and Saturday evening. She explained that 12 local churches are involved with approximately 25 volunteers offering comfort and support to the public to try and create a calming effect at night time within the town centre. They distribute water, flip flops, lollipops and if needed basic first aid.

For safety reasons they work in two's or threes and keep in contact with the Police though radio contact. The uniform is a blue jacket and cap with Street Pastor written on the back. A previous grant had been allocated for training and equipment and a further request is to ensure that further equipment can be purchased for use over the forthcoming Christmas period.

Members and the Police representatives praised the valuable work of the Street Pastors and it was agreed that a letter be sent from the Management Group congratulating them on their work.

It was agreed that £500 be allocated from the Area Forum Budget to the Blackwood Street Pastor Scheme.

9. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER /LOADING BAYS ON THE HIGH STREET

Mr Clive Campbell reported that officers had worked closely with the Police in order to find a solution to simplify the traffic restrictions and keep traffic moving on Blackwood High Street. He explained that an Order has been prepared and the change would propose that the east side of High Street be kept free from any loading bays, disabled parking limited, and some short term parking (not exclusively for Blue Badge holders) be available.

Mr Campbell considered that the new proposals were the best compromise available for all the issues raised by the public and the Police and indicated that Mr. Bob Campbell would be available following the meeting to discuss the new proposals in more detail and to present the drawings.

10. BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT GROUP AUDIT – NOVEMBER

The following items were discussed:

- (a) Car Park Signage High Street (Page 6) – It was suggested that signage for the main car park should be prior to the roundabout at the southern entrance to the town. (Mr. B. Campbell indicated that he would investigate this suggestion).
- (b) Overhanging Branches – Hall Street (Page 6) - Reported that a number of Cherry Trees needed to be pruned in the vicinity of Cliff Road (near the lane to the river).
- (c) Extensive graffiti on Building Fabric – Northern Retail Park (Page 7) - It was explained that the building and land are privately owned and cannot therefore be covered by the council's CCTC. It was noted however that the Police have recently interviewed a group of people and identified one individual responsible for the tagging graffiti in the town.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Lambert reported that a number of local businesses might be reforming a local Chamber of Trade and consideration should be given to inviting a representative to join the Management Group if they are successful.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 18th February 2010 at 4.30 pm – Pontllanfraith Council Chamber.

The meeting closed at 5.50 pm.