



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PONTLLANFRAITH
ON WEDNESDAY, 24TH FEBRUARY 2010 AT 4.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor K. Smallman – Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs K. Presley and K. Etheridge

Messrs C. Sharp and J. Organ (Local Residents), D. Davies and A. Farina-Childs (Blackwood Town Council), PC K. Hughes (Gwent Police)

Councillor R. Davies (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Countryside)

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 Inspector Childs (Gwent Police), Mr J. Hold (Clerk - Blackwood Town Council), Ms D. Davies (Local Resident) and Mr P. Lambert (Local Business).

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest were made at the meeting.

2. MINUTES

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

Blackwood Town Centre Management Group held on 26th November 2009.

MATTERS ARISING

3. Parish Nursing (Minute no 7)

It was noted that the Chairman had previously declared an interest on this item as he is a

member of the church promoting the scheme.

Officers had discussed the project and agreed that it did not meet the criteria for a grant from the Area Forum Budget and that other sources of funding would be suggested.

4. CLOSURE OF BLACKWOOD HIGH STREET – CONTINGENCY PLANS AND INSTALLATION OF BARRIER

Mr Bob Campbell reported that the Police has successfully controlled the closure of the High Street on a Thursday for the last six months and would continue until 11th March when after that date they would then have a lower presence on the High Street. The council are due to take over responsibility of controlling the closure on the 18th March and have made preparations for a barrier gate to be installed.

The detailed designs for the barrier gate have been agreed and NCS have agreed to prioritise the work in order to achieve installation before 18th March. The representative from Gwent Police assured members that the Police would still be in the vicinity of the High Street on a Thursday and a fixed penalty of £60 and 3 penalty points would be imposed should anyone attempt to drive through the High Street.

A local member stressed the importance of the gates being in place by the 18th March. A concern was raised on the displacement of cruiser vehicles using Cliff Road/Hall Street on a Thursday evening and the Police assured members that they were aware of this concern and although the vehicles were local a number of Police officers would be stationed at this area in the near future to try and deter an alternative route from being established.

An officer confirmed that every effort would be made for the barrier to be installed by the 18th March. Should this not be possible temporary measures would be used to prevent traffic from using the High Street and the Police would enforce anyone transgressing.

Finally it was reported that a minority number of traders from the High Street had expressed their concerns publically regarding their loss of trade since the closure of the High Street on a Thursday evening. It was noted however that the council had responded to this press article outlining the positive aspects for the majority of residents who supported the closure. Mr. Campbell also reported that no objection had ever been received to the experimental road closure order.

5. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS - UPDATE

It was reported that the Prohibition of Waiting to the east side of High Street and various other changes to the west side had now been published. All traders and businesses had been notified by letter and although 6 responses had been received there has not been any major objections to date. The order is open for comment until 11th March. Councillor Etheridge supported the proposal as he continued to receive complaints of parking within the loading bays.

It was agreed that an update report would be presented to the next meeting of the Management Group. It was confirmed that the traffic warden had changed his rest day to work in the town centre every Saturday.

6. ARTWORK AT THE BUS STATION

Mr Dallimore explained that new artwork would be located on the retaining wall at Gordon Road. The Arts Sub-Group are due to meet in early March and make a choice on designs submitted from a number of artists. It is expected to take 3 months to develop the artwork to

the installation stage. Mr Dallimore indicated that he would bring the designs to the next meeting of the Management Group.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

7. Jobs Created and Lost in Blackwood Town 2009

Mr Highway outlined a report on the jobs created and lost in Blackwood Town Centre during 2009. He explained that the year had been very difficult for retailers with a number of major stores going into administration. Also in anticipation of the large new shopping development in Cardiff opening, a new local strategy was launched in September called 'Unique Places' which aimed to show that the local town centre had its own individual identity and character.

The report gave details of jobs lost and created and then compared results to the previous year. It also gave details of the footfall for the two comparable years.

Mr Highway reported that Blackwood town presently had the lowest number of vacant retail properties (compared with the other main town centres within the county borough) and that there was a good mix of independent and multiple retailers.

Members noted the report.

BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT GROUP AUDIT – JANUARY

The following items were discussed:

- 8. Additional Car Park Signage Southern End of Town (Page 6)**– It was reported that no more signs could be erected near the library because the area is too narrow. A new sign will however be erected to sign the car park (with the number of spaces).

A concern was expressed on the present condition of the Woolworths store which was covered in fly posters – Mr Highway responded that he had contacted the owner of the property to inform him of the posters and if there is no response Planning Legislation will allow the council to take legal action to address the problem.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The present situation at the southern retail park was discussed and the need to encourage any new businesses to the site. Mr Dallimore confirmed that the agent for the retail park has been in discussion with the Chief Planning Officer regarding the conditions for businesses occupying the retail premises. It was agreed that a verbal report on progress in filling the empty units be given at the next meeting.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 22nd April 2010 at 4.30pm – Pontllanfraith Council Chamber.

The Chairman reported that this would be the last meeting that Mr MacVicar would be attending as he would be moving to another post within the department. The Group wished him well and thanked him for all his help and support.

The meeting closed at 5.10 p.m.