



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE,
YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY, 3RD JULY 2013 AT 2:00PM,**

PRESENT:

Councillor N. Dix (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs P. Cook (Vice Chairman)

Councillors:

K. James (Cabinet Member Regeneration Housing and Sustainable Development) and
T. Williams (Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation and Engineering)

Together with:

Councillor C. Erasmus (Town Councillor), Councillor Z. Hammond (Town Councillor),
Inspector M. Smith (Gwent Police), Mr J. Hold (Town Centre Clerk) and Mr A. Oldham
(Manager Blackwood Shopping Precinct).

Also:

A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), I. MacVicar (Group Manager Operations),
I. Mitchell (Manager Blackwood Miners Institute), H. Morgan (Team Leader, Engineering),
S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager), A. Dallimore (Team Leader Urban Renewal),
E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer).

1. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

Councillor N. Dix was proposed and seconded as Chairman and by a show of hands this was
unanimously agreed.

Councillor Mrs P. Cook was proposed and seconded as Vice Chairman and by a show of
hands this was unanimously agreed.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs E. Aldworth (Vice Chair
Regeneration and Environment Committee), D.T. Davies (Chair Regeneration and
Environment Committee), Mrs D. Ellis and C. Hawker and Mr R. Campbell (Senior Assistant
Engineer, Highways).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 20th February 2013 (minute nos. 1-3 on page nos.1-3) be approved as a correct record.

5. CONSULTATION BODY TO RECOMMEND THE PELICAN CROSSINGS ARE CHANGED TO ZEBRA CROSSINGS ON THE HIGH STREET.

Members noted the recommendation to change the existing Pelican Crossings on the High Street to Zebra Crossings, the implications of which were fully discussed.

Clarification was sought in relation to the installation costs associated with the different crossings and Officers confirmed that a Zebra Crossing would cost approximately £20,000 with a Pelican Crossing costing approximately £60,000.

Officers confirmed that the three existing crossing were reaching or had reached the end of their life expectancy and were now a failure risk. Replacement options had been considered and Officers felt that Zebra Crossings, by giving priority back to the pedestrian would be the preferable option going forward. It was noted that the change over would take place as part of any going regeneration programmes or should a crossing fail.

Concerns were expressed that Zebra Crossings did not afford the same feeling of safety to the pedestrian and did not actively slow the flow of traffic. Officers advised that the Department of Transport offered no evidence that Pelican Crossings were safer than Zebra Crossing and felt that giving back priority to the pedestrian when coupled with the nature of traffic movements on the High Street, low volume and slower moving traffic, made the Zebra Crossing an ideal option for that area going forward.

Having considered the issues involved, by a show of hands the Management Group voted 4 to 3 for the recommendation to change the Pelican crossings to Zebra crossings on the High Street.

6. CONSULTATION BODY TO RECOMMEND THE INTRODUCTION OF A 20MPH SPEED LIMIT ON THE HIGH STREET.

Having considered the issues involved, by a show of hands the Management Group voted unanimously, 7 to 0, for the recommendation to introduce a 20mph speed limit on the High Street.

7. UPDATE ON TRAFFIC LIGHTS AT BLACKWOOD GATE RETAIL PARK

An update was provided on the planning application in relation the Blackwood Gate Retail Park development and the installation of traffic lights that formed part of that permission. Members noted that the applicant had 5 years before the expiration of the permission to implement the associated conditions including the installation of traffic lights. No further discussion had taken place with Officers and no further applications had been submitted to date.

The Management Group noted the update.

8. FUNDING FOR SHOP WATCH SCHEME

The report outlined the information exchange protocol system 'SHOPWATCHONLINE', which if implemented allowed the current Blackwood Retail Partnership to run online.

Members were advised that retailers were finding it increasing difficult to release staff to attend meetings due to financial constraints and the numbers attending were dwindling as a result. It became apparent that a different way of working would need to be implemented if the Partnership was to continue to operate successfully. Consideration was given to the different methods that could be used and the Shop Watch On Line system was identified as a way forward. The systems capabilities were detailed and Members noted that it allowed messages to be sent between individual members or to the entire Partnership. It also allowed them to receive, view and upload photographs that would assist in the identification of shoplifting offenders.

To this end, Inspector Smith requested that consideration be given to allocating £800 to fund the first year of the systems operation. This would allow the system to be offered free of charge for the first year and would also allow more members to be recruited into the Partnership.

The Chair thanked Inspector Smith for his report and Members questions were welcomed.

Clarification was sought with regard to the position of the current budget allocation and Members noted the current balance.

Members agreed that introducing the system free of charge of the first year would assist in recruiting additional members to the Partnership and felt that once the value of the system had be proven, retailers would be happy to pay the £20 individual annual fee for subsequent years.

It was proposed and seconded that £800 be awarded to fund the Blackwood Retail Partnership Online and by a show of hands the Management Group voted unanimously, 8 to 0, in favour of funding the scheme.

9. POUNDSTRETCHERS UPDATE

Members received an update with regard to the present position of the Poundstretcher store.

Officer's confirmed that the matter was with Insurance Agents for the Landlord and Retailer and advised that the Poundstretcher organisation had expressed its desire to return to the site. Given the extent of the damage it would be approximately 2 years before they would in a position to reuse the site.

It was noted that the site currently housed a bare hoarding and Officers expressed concern that unless appropriate action was taken it would be subject to vandalism.

Members requested that a report be presented to the October meeting of the Management Group detailing any appropriate schemes and funding streams in order to utilise the hoarding.

10. REQUEST TO RELOCATE THE EXISTING ON-STREET DISABLED PARKING BAY FROM WOODBINE ROAD TO HIGH STREET

The report outlined the request to relocate the existing disabled parking bay from the south side of Woodbine Road to the west side of the High Street, Blackwood.

Members were advised that requests had been made by a number of blue badge holders concerned that the disabled bays on Woodbine Road were inaccessible due to the steep incline and the lack of dropped kerbs on the adjacent footway. It was felt that swapping these with the limited waiting bay that exists on the much flatter part of the High Street would be an acceptable alternative and could be progressed as part of the town's traffic regulation order during the current financial year.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and Members views were sought.

Members felt that this change was long over due and were please that this matter would now be progressed.

Having considered the request it was proposed and seconded and by a show of the hands the Management Group voted unanimously, 9-0, to relocate the existing on-street disabled parking bay from Woodbine Road to the High Street, Blackwood.

11. UNIQUE PLACES

The report outline the launch of the new 'Unique Places' brochure, which set out information on each of the County Borough's principal town centres and highlighted the potential that they offered for retailers, businesses, service providers and community groups.

Officers confirmed that the model was recognised as an example of good practice and had been distributed to the UK's top 100 retailers, property developers and property agents and one had also been sent to 'retail guru' Mary Portus. Members were advised that a previous brochure had played an instrumental part in bringing the Wetherspoons chain to Caerphilly.

Copies of the brochure were distributed to the Members of the Management Group and the Chairman commended Officers for all their hard work in producing the 'Unique Places' model and brochure.

12. UPDATE ON BLACKWOOD MINERS INSTITUTE

Members received an update on the refurbishment programme for Blackwood Miners Institute.

The key objective of the refurbishment programme was to improve the quality of events, attract bigger and better acts and performers and to attract, increase and develop new audiences. By developing the programme of events, workshops and classes the sustainability of the building would be secured in the long term.

Members noted the work done during Phase 1 and 2 of the programme and were advised that this work had now been completed. Phase 3 of the programme was currently out to tender and included works to replace the upper bar on the 1st floor, refurbish the lower bar on the ground floor, the refurbishment of the old Markham Suite and new external signage to the building.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the update and Members questions were welcomed.

Clarification was sought in relation to the time frame for the Phase 3 tendering process and The Deputy Theatre Manager of Blackwood Miners Institute confirmed that works should commence at the beginning of August and be completed by the end of October 2013.

13. UPDATE ON BUS STATION SECURITY

Members noted the progress made with regard to the proposal to maintain a physical security presence at Blackwood Bus Station. The consultation process undertaken was detailed and a report presented to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 21st May 2013. At that meeting the Scrutiny Committee resolved that appropriate funding streams be identified in order to continue the current service provision. A further report would now be presented to Cabinet for determination.

Councillor T. Williams confirmed that there was support from Cabinet for the retention of a physical security presence at the bus station and thanked Officers for all their hard work to date and eagerly awaited the final report and its recommendations.

14. SUMMER FESTIVAL 2013

The report updated Members on this year's Blackwood Summer Festival and detailed the stalls and attractions on offer.

Officer confirmed that children had been made the focus of this year's Festival and this had been extremely successful. Special thanks were paid to Paul Hudson and his team for organising such a fantastic event.

Members congratulated all those involved and were pleased that the event had been so well attended and expertly arranged. It was felt that the success of the event reflected all the hard work involved.

15. BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE AUDIT REPORT

Member noted the updated audit report for May 2013.

Officers confirmed that the lock on the ALDI car park had been replaced and was now being locked.

Inspector Smith confirmed that his team had been briefed on the illegal parking issues as detailed in the report and would be working to alleviate the problem.

The meeting closed at 3:15pm.