



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE ON FRIDAY, 25TH OCTOBER 2013 AT 2:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Councillors: N. Dix, K. James, K. James, C. Hawker, T. Williams

Together with:

Councillor D. T. Davies (Consultee), C. Erasmus (Town Councillor), Z. Hammond (Town Councillor), Mr. J. Hold (Clerk, Blackwood Town Centre), Sgt Mark Thomas (Gwent Police)

Also:

A. Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal & Conservation), P. Hudson (Marketing & Events Manager), B. Campbell (Senior Assistant Engineer), S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager), A. Jones (Complaints Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor E. Aldworth, Andrew Highway (Town Centre Manager), Inspector Mark Smith (Gwent Police).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES OF MEETING 3RD JULY 2013

It is to be noted that Mr Huw Edwards from the Blackwood Retail Partnership was present at the meeting on the 3rd July 2013 but was not listed as attending.

The previous minutes were taken as read.

4. POUNDSTRETCHERS UPDATE

Allan Dallimore advised the group that the retail agent had been asked on the 23rd October for an update on the situation but no information has been received.

Allan did advise that there are now decorative hoarding boards around the site, which aim to make the area more aesthetically pleasing.

5. CHRISTMAS MARKET UPDATE

Paul Hudson advised that his team promoting the event through as many channels as possible in an attempt to attract visitors from as wide a geographical area as possible, which will hopefully attract additional visitors to Blackwood in the future. 20,000 leaflets have been produced and distributed to promote the event.

Feedback has been very positive so far.

The number of stalls has been increased this year due to the increased interest from last year. There is a capped figure of 40 stalls due to the layout of the site and other attractions located throughout the town.

Paul confirmed that the support from the Town Council in promoting the event has been greatly appreciated.

Mr Hold (Clerk) asked if there could be an ice rink in the town. Paul advised that costs were requested from the organiser of the ice rink in Bargoed however it is too prohibitive at present. The manager of the ASDA store was approached to see if they could contribute towards a rink, but unfortunately the money is not available.

Councillor Zoe Hammond wanted to point out that the leaflet being distributed for the event has a different date to the actual date of the Christmas lights being turned on. Paul advised that he would arrange for the correct date to be entered in the press release.

Councillor Dix thanked Paul and his team for all their hard work in organising the event.

6. UNIQUE PLACES DISCOUNT CARD

Steve Wilcox presented the group with a PowerPoint presentation about the Unique Places Christmas Discount Card.

Steve explained that 30,000 cards are being produced for distribution to the public. The card will entitle the bearer to a discount and/or offer at participating retailers. Initial feedback from retailers has been positive.

Participating stores will display a "star" poster in their window, indicating that they are taking part in the scheme. The cards are available from designated places in each town or alternatively there is an electronic card that can be downloaded for smart phones.

Allan Dallimore advised that there is a dedicated Website for smart phones, tablets and PCs, which will enable people to see all of the offers in each town, even while they are in their local town centre.

Mr Hold asked if there was any decision with regards to offering free parking over Christmas to tie in with this promotion.

Councillor Ken James advised that no decision had been made yet.

7. RETAIL SURVEY

Steve Wilcox introduced a PowerPoint presentation to the group.

The survey carried out showed that there were some interesting responses and that the general consensus is that retailers have noticed an increase in their trade from previous years.

There were 600 surveys sent out which included some open-ended questions, which were designed to get more feedback from businesses.

The results were shown to the group and explained by the officer. Overall the feedback was positive and reflected that business optimism is increasing.

The Chairman noted that parking was deemed problematic by businesses; is this due to the cost of parking or lack of parking?

It was confirmed that illegal and obstructive parking was deemed problematic.

The Chairman then asked the question as to whether or not there are traffic wardens or are the police carrying out the role of dealing with illegal parking.

Police representatives advised that unfortunately the resources prevent the police from providing a dedicated officer to deal with parking problems. Tickets are given out when offences are found but this does not deter people from parking where they should not.

The Chairman asked for confirmation as to how many officers there are to deal with these issues.

The group were advised that there are 3 PSCOs dedicated to the town but they also cover other areas, which reduces the amount of time that they are able to spend in one area.

The police were asked if it was possible for officers if driving passed and notice illegal parking could they stop and issue a ticket. The group were advised that this probably would not happen as the officers were more than likely on their way to attend a call elsewhere.

8. INSTALLATION OF NEW ENTRY SIGN, CEFN ROAD

Bob Campbell updated the group on the installation of the new sign by stating that there are two elements to this matter.

Firstly, Officers in Engineering were consulted last spring to provide a no entry except for emergency access and to extend the restricted access area to outside the Methodist Church. This is currently out for consultation with emergency services and road haulage companies. The police have confirmed that they are not going to support any change.

The second option is to extend the bollards. This could be tried but it would need to be enforced as people ignore that double yellow lines that currently exist.

The Chairman agreed that without enforcement people would ignore signs so putting a new sign there would not really be of any benefit. A resident has complained to Police and Members about being blocked in by vehicles parking there.

The question was then put to the police asking if they could enforce what is already in place by monitoring the area.

It was agreed that the police would monitor the area to keep an eye on the situation.

9. UPDATE ON CAERPHILLY AFTER DARK & RENEWAL OF VANILLA BAR LICENCE

Sergeant Mark Thomas was able to advise the group that the licence renewal for the Vanilla Bar took place at the end of August and could confirm that 3 out of 4 of the objectives were not met by the Vanilla Bar but the licence was re-issued.

The new licence means that the bar has to close half an hour earlier than before and can close at 1:30 am on Friday nights and Saturday night.

An appeal hearing is set for the 25th November, which Police representatives will be attending.

New measures for controlling overcrowding and behaviour of patrons are conditions of the renewed licence. In addition, the police have introduced more officers to deal with overspill from the bar. Also additional CCTV cameras are to be installed

Bob Campbell advised that people spilling out onto the street to smoke is really part of café culture these days so could it not be moved elsewhere.

The Chairman asked if the moving of the designated smoking area could be looked at.

Sgt. Thomas advised that this will be looked at following the appeal hearing.

Mr John Hold confirmed that Town Council has provided a letter supporting the police for their hearing regarding the appeal.

The question was raised as to where the additional cameras are to be fitted, Sgt. Thomas advised that the cameras were going to be fitted inside of the pub as the existing Council cameras in the town have good coverage of the exterior of the premises.

One of the other queries raised was the fact that the emergency exit is being used as the main entrance and glasses are being used instead of plastic ones.

Allan Dallimore advised that the owners have been made aware that this should not be happening and Officers will continue to monitor.

The Blackwood After Dark initiative is progressing, with additional officers on patrol in the evenings. These officers visit bars and clubs to monitor each evening's activities.

The Chairman thanked the police for the update on both matters.

10. AUDIT

Allan Dallimore advised that he has had a site meeting with the tree officer in relation to the overhanging branches at William Street, who has confirmed that there is no problem with CCTV cameras being blocked, but will re visit the site in the spring when the trees are in leaf.

Bob Campbell advised that the traffic orders are ongoing with regards to the provision of a dedicated disabled parking bay on High Street.

Bob confirmed that the road closure signage move for Pentwyn Road has been approved via a Traffic Order. The moving of the signage and their electricity supply has been ordered with street lighting.

Allan advised that the installation of posts and road studs on the crossing point near Argos is scheduled for 6-8 weeks time.

Sgt Mark Thomas confirmed that in relation to the car cruisers, the Police carried out an operation at the end of September and 3 vehicles were seized for having no insurance in place. With regard to the taxi bay trial, Sgt. Thomas confirmed that the trial cannot progress at present due to funding and resource issues.

Meeting closed 2:53pm

CHAIRMAN