

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN ON MONDAY, 5TH MARCH 2001 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor P.J. Bevan - Chairman
Councillor Mrs. K. Gwynne - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

M.H. Newman and K.R. Snell

Together with:

T. Peppin (Policy and Research Manager), D. Earey (Principal Engineer Management and Regulations), J. Elliott (Research Officer), M. Howland (Team Leader – Urban Renewal), P. Gomer (Head of Lifelong Learning and Leisure), D. Nutt (Tourism Officer), T. White (Refuse and Cleansing Officer) and Mrs K. Wall (Committee Services Officer)

Also present:

M. Evans (Clerk to Caerphilly Town Council), Ms S. Jones (Shopping Centre Manageress), J. Higgs (Caerphilly Access Group), J. Stephens (CADW), A. Hood (CADW), Mr Vizard (Caerphilly and District Civic Society)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.E. Fussell and H. Price and J. Rogers (Senior Solicitor).

1. PRESENTATION – MR T. CLIFT (MANAGING DIRECTOR CARDIFF RAILWAY COMPANY)

The Chairman welcomed Mr T. Clift, Managing Director of Cardiff Railway Company who had been invited to the meeting to provide an update report on Cardiff Railway Company with particular reference to Valley Lines.

Mr Clift addressed the meeting and gave an update on train service performance levels. He indicated that Cardiff Railway Company was the only train network achieving a better performance now than twelve months ago. He mentioned problems being experienced by other networks in relation to speed restrictions but explained that there were no specific problems in respect of the Cardiff Railway Company's area of operation.

He also reported that the amount of delays experienced by passengers this year had reduced by 18% compared to the previous year and that passenger complaints over the same period had fallen.

The period before Christmas was then discussed and Mr Cliff outlined problems experienced as a result of the inclement weather and flooding problems at Lisvane on the Rhymney to Cardiff line. Leaf fall had also caused problems, but Mr Cliff explained that a programme of tree felling had been undertaken at Caerphilly Tunnel to ease the problems. Reference was then made to the incident that resulted in dangerous, loose scaffolding around Fanam House, adjacent to Queen's Street Station. This had necessitated the closure of the Station until an inspection by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr Cliff presented details of journeys undertaken and reported that the number of journeys in the current year had increased by 8% on the previous year's figures. The issue of season tickets had also risen by 13% in the current year.

Copies of leaflets giving details of senior railcards, Day Explorer tickets, group travel discounts and the newly introduced Capital Card were circulated to the Group.

Mr Cliff informed the Group that the Capital Card was the latest initiative from Valley Lines and had been launched three weeks ago. Valley Lines and Cardiff Bus Company had worked in partnership to provide better integrated travel with much more convenient connections between train and bus.

Investment details and links to transport integration were outlined and Mr Cliff informed the Group that a new retail unit and booking office had been established at Caerphilly Station in a formerly derelict building on the site. The scheme had been undertaken by a partnership comprising the local authority, WDA and Railtrack and had been nominated for an award as a rail integration initiative.

It was reported that Aber booking office was now operational from the local Spar shop. Details of forthcoming investment were then outlined and it was noted that the National Assembly, through SWIFT had made funding available over the next three years to investigate bottlenecks such as those experienced in Queen's Street, provide additional signs and platforms etc.

Mr Cliff concluded his report by advising the Group that the Strategic Rail Authority was undertaking a re franchising exercise and that Valley Lines would form part of the All Wales and Borders bid.

The Chairman thanked Mr Cliff for the information provided and invited comments and questions from Group members.

Councillor Snell expressed his concern about the untidy conditions around many stations, particularly Caerphilly. He also asked about maintenance procedures at Caerphilly tunnel.

Mr Cliff agreed with the comments made regarding the untidy condition of areas around stations and emphasised that Rail Track was concerned about environmental issues and problems with fly tipping.

He also reported that ongoing maintenance works at Caerphilly tunnel were usually undertaken during the night when there were no trains running. In the case of necessary emergency works, the normal train service would be cancelled and a bus service would be introduced.

Mr Evans (Clerk to Caerphilly Town Council) commented on the improvements made to Caerphilly Bus Station. He then raised the issue of overcrowding on trains and the fact that Valley Lines operated small, two carriage trains. He reported that at busy times such as half term, passengers boarding the train at Caerphilly were often standing all the way to Cardiff and he asked why, in view of passenger safety this capacity was not increased.

Mr Cliff responded and indicated that the Health and Safety Executive had recently undertaken research to determine whether overcrowded trains were unsafe. This research had concluded that overcrowded trains were not unsafe as the trains were designed to carry a far greater weight than the number of seated passengers.

He acknowledged that at peak times overcrowding often occurred. Cardiff Railway Company had recognised the problems and from May an additional two trains on the Rhymney to Cardiff line would operate on certain Saturdays.

Mr T. Peppin (Policy and Research Manager) asked about progress made in respect of CCTV installation and public address equipment at Caerphilly Station.

Mr Clift reported that CCTV had now been installed in the bus station and that scrolling next train indicators had been provided. An information point had also been located on the platform.

Mr Howland (Team Manager – Urban Renewal) asked about progress made at Bargoed Station.

Mr Clift explained that the lifts installed at Bargoed Station had been filling with water. Tenders had been invited for remedial works, but until these works had been completed, the Health and Safety Executive was unable to conduct a full station inspection.

The Chairman thanked Mr Clift for attending and members of the Group and Officers for their contributions.

2. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Group held on 29th November 2000 were received and noted.

Matters Arising

(i) Maintenance of Street Furniture

Concern was raised about the untidy condition of the cenotaph area and Stockton Street Square.

Mr Howland (Team Manager – Urban Renewal) gave details of the enhanced cleansing budget and reported that seats in this area had recently been re-stained and bins refurbished. Environmental Services was also exploring the joint funding of a hot pressure wash system to clean such areas and exploring a joint venture with a private company to provide a push along sweeper.

The problem of dog fouling in this area was also discussed and it was noted that the push along sweeper could include a dog fouling attachment.

(ii) Car parking arrangements at the Castle

Mr Higgs (Caerphilly Access Group) reported that he had visited the official car park at the Castle with an Officer from the Highways Section and indicated that the journey from the car park to the main entrance was very difficult for wheel chair users.

A CADW representative advised that disabled visitors could use the drop off point at the Castle Bridge. He also reported that the surface of the walkway had been improved and the steps were now less steep.

(iii) Flooding at Castle Court Shopping Centre

Ms S. Jones (Castle Court Shopping Centre Manageress) updated the meeting on actions she had taken to investigate the causes of the flooding incident on 30th October. She reported that in the first instance she had engaged contractors to examine the culverts for evidence of damage or blockages etc. This inspection had revealed that the culverts were

not damaged or blocked.

The sensors located in the culverts had then been upgraded to indicate incidents of blockages and higher than usual water levels. The height of the security gates at the shopping centre would also be raised to facilitate the free flow of surface water and to prevent it 'backing up' and pooling.

Ms Jones reported that she had requested the authority to take appropriate cleansing/maintenance action to minimise the risk of on street flooding affecting Castle Court.

The Chairman thanked Ms Jones for the information provided.

3. **PLAYING FIELDS AT CRESCENT ROAD, CAERPHILLY**

Consideration was given to a Cabinet report dated 13th February that outlined a number of proposals to introduce a short term and long term action plan for the re-introduction of the Crescent Road playing fields for full use. Cabinet agreed with the proposals contained in the report that:-

- the Crescent Road playing fields be maintained and two pitches be used for football and rugby;
- the tennis courts be opened for public use;
- in the longer term, the railings fronting the Crescent Road fields be removed and replaced by an alternative barrier for traffic to gain access to the fields;
- the request made by the National Playing Fields Association to dedicate the fields to mark the 600th anniversary of Owain Glyndwr be accepted.

Mr Vizard (Caerphilly and District Civic Society) expressed his concern about the rutted condition of the playing fields following the Big Cheese event and asked whether the fields would be suitable for rugby and football use.

Mr Gomer (Head of Lifelong Learning and Leisure) assured Mr Vizard that his Directorate would work closely with the Tourism Section to minimise any damage caused to the playing fields during the Big Cheese. He also reported that the pupils of Ysgol y Castell currently used one of the rugby/football pitches and the Head Teacher was confident that the pitch was suitable.

Mr M. Evans (Clerk to Caerphilly Town Council) indicated that the Town Council welcomed the proposals to reinstate the playing fields but he also made reference to problems associated with dog fouling in this area.

Other Group members concurred that there were problems with dog fouling in this area. Mr White (Refuse and Cleansing Officer) agreed to ask the Enforcement Officers to visit the areas identified.

4. **ITEMS RAISED BY CAERPHILLY TOWN COUNCIL**

(i) **Proposed Retail Development 'Top of the Town'**

It was reported that no firm proposals had yet been submitted.

(ii) **Road Markings – Crescent Road**

Mr M. Evans (Clerk to Caerphilly Town Council) referred to the Traffic Order to introduce parking restrictions on Crescent Road and to problems currently being caused by double parking.

Mr Earey (Principal Engineer – Management and Regulations) reported that double yellow lines had not yet been introduced as the road signing vehicle had not been able to access the stretch of road because of parked cars. He noted the comments made and agreed to investigate the issue further.

(iii) **Skateboarding – Progress on the Bye Law and Provision of a Skateboarding Facility**

It was reported that discussions on the extent of the bye law were currently taking place between Legal Services and the National Assembly for Wales.

Councillor Snell outlined details of a complaint he had received from a resident of Station Terrace reporting that the Station car park was used at night by skateboarders with resulting damage to parked cars.

Mr Gomer commented on proposals to provide a skateboarding facility in the borough. He stressed the importance of involving young people in discussions from the beginning and felt that establishment of a Youth Group in the area would be beneficial. Potential sites were currently being investigated and suggestions included Morgan Jones Park and other potential sites. Once a site had been determined, a report would be submitted to Cabinet to consider the issue further and to determine appropriate funding.

It was also noted that Mr Earey (Principal Engineer – Management and Regulations) had undertaken to review the extent of defined highway land and liaise with Legal Services on progression of the bye law.

A progress report would be provided at the next meeting.

(iv) **Cleansing**

Mr Evans referred to a letter that had been published in a recent edition of the 'Campaign' newspaper referring to the untidy condition of the area surrounding the Castle.

Mr White (Refuse and Cleansing Officer) outlined details of the street cleansing undertaken in this area. He also agreed to ask the Enforcement Officers to visit the areas identified.

(v) **Redevelopment of the area around the Piccadilly Square – Garage and Shops**

The Chairman enquired about progress the authority had made in purchasing the area of land to the rear of the shops. Mr Howland (Team Leader – Urban Renewal) agreed to make some enquiries and inform the Chairman accordingly.

The unsafe condition of the shops was mentioned and it was agreed to place this item on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting of the Group.

(vi) **Housing Development – Former Tar Plant and Surrounding Area**

Mr Howland (Team Leader – Urban Renewal) reported that a planning application had been lodged with the Planning Division and that discussions were being held regarding satisfactory highway proposals before the application would be submitted to the Planning Committee.

5. **DRAFT CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN**

Copies of the Draft Caerphilly Town Centre Action Plan and Draft Dafydd Williams Park Development Plan were distributed for consultation by the Town Centre Action Plan Section and comments were invited.

The meeting closed at 3.40 p.m.