



CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY 19TH MARCH 2008 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor P.J.Bevan - Chairman
Councillor J.Fussell – Vice- Chairman

Councillors:

G.G.Hibbert, M.Newman and S.Kent

Together with:

I. MacVicar (Business Development Officer), A. Dallimore (Urban Renewal Manager), A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), S. Beacham (Senior Parks Officer), P. Hudson (Tourism Officer), J. Elliott (Research Officer) and D. Phillips (Partnership Support Officer)

Also Present:

K. Robottom (CRA), Mrs. S. Cooper (Caerphilly Access Group) and K. Williams (Caerphilly Town Council), J. Couzens (Castle Court Shopping Centre), R. Gough (GAVO), J. Evans and L. Howells (Cadw), PC D.Morgan (Gwent Police)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D.T. Davies (Cabinet Member for Regeneration), J. Stephens (CADW), Councillors Mrs. C. Forehead and M. Prew, Inspector B. Williams (Gwent Police) and T. White (Refuse and Cleansing Officer).

1. PRESENTATION – TOP OF TOWN DEVELOPMENT

Mr MacVicar reported that he had received a message that Mr Williams from Urban Development Wales was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting to speak about the proposed Top of Town development. He would however attend the next meeting scheduled for June.

Mr MacVicar had previously attended a meeting with the developer and local retailers and therefore relayed some of the issues discussed at this meeting to the Group. The development gained planning consent last year and the site acquisition is expected to cost approximately £10-12m with a total cost of approximately £36m for the completed scheme.

During the meeting the traders discussed size and costs of the units and although there may be a minimum of a 15 year lease on the units, the expected rents of the smaller units may be in the reach of some of the present tenants in Cardiff Road.

Concern was raised regarding the present condition of many of the empty premises in the area and also the rumours circulating regarding the viability of the scheme.

Mr MacVicar indicated that any major changes to the development would be reported to the Management Group and that Mr Williams would be attending the next meeting to respond to any concerns.

2. TOMMY COOPER SOCIETY

Mr Tudor Jones was attending the meeting to give an update on developments from the Tommy Cooper Society. Mr Jones thanked the Management Group for inviting him and reported that on this day Tommy Cooper would have celebrated his 87th birthday!

Mr Jones outlined the history of the Society which was founded in 2002 with one of the main aims to raise funds to erect a statue and to ensure that the public knew that Caerphilly was the birthplace of Tommy Cooper.

The statue was commissioned and following assistance from a number of sources and fundraising events the amount was raised. Sir Anthony Hopkins indicated that he was a fan of the comic and when contacted agreed to become the Patron of the Society and to unveil the statue.

The day of the unveiling (23rd February) was a tremendous success with most of the television stations and national newspapers covering the story and giving excellent publicity to the town.

The next event planned by the society is a show performed by members of the Magic Circle at the Caerphilly Workman's Hall, which is hoped may become an annual event.

Discussions have been held with the trustees of the hall and it is hoped that the Society can work with them to attract funding and return the Grade II listed building back to an entertainment theatre for the town.

The Chairman thanked Mr Jones for the update and for achieving tremendous publicity for the town. He wished the society success in their future projects.

Mr Dallimore reminded members that Bedwas Workman's Hall had been identified by the Council Arts Strategy as being the key focus for the future of arts and cultural activities for the Caerphilly Basin area although there may be an opportunity for a commercial improvement grant for the Caerphilly hall.

Mr MacVicar reported that the Workman's Hall is an important building to the town and could provide a much needed facility. Officers would investigate if any assistance/advice could be given from the council.

3. MINUTES

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

Caerphilly Town Centre Management Management Group held on 5th December 2007.

4. TAXI RANK PROPOSAL FOR CASTLE STREET, CAERPHILLY TOWN

Mr Delahaye (Head of Public Protection) and Mr Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager) attended the meeting for this item.

Mr Campbell outlined a proposal for a new taxi rank at Castle Street which had been requested from the Caerphilly County Borough Taxi Drivers Association (CCBTA) as there has been an increase in demand for taxi services near the bandstand since the relocation of the post office.

The report gave details of how the existing bus bay could be utilised to accommodate a two vehicle taxi rank. The proposal is compliant with current design standards and is not expected to have any significant effect on the nearby traffic signals.

Mr Delahaye reported that the proposal appeared consistent with the Local Transport Plan which required sites for taxi ranks to be identified in each major town and the Statement of Licensing Policy which recognised the importance that public transport, such as taxis, could have on preventing nuisance. It was also considered that the proposal would compliment the recent Strategic Assessment agreed by the Community Safety Partnership which had identified the reduction of anti social behaviour, alcohol and improvement in the street scene as their priorities. Finally Mr Delahaye reminded the Group of their responsibility under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act to take account of crime and disorder issues in their activities and decision making.

Mr Couzens responded that the retail premises at the Castle Court Centre were unanimous in opposing the proposal. He referred to the large number of pedestrians (approximately 105,000 each week) which enter the shopping area at this point and also raised a concern regarding the safety of bus passengers alighting near the area. Mr Couzens also considered that the majority of users at the new post office are pedestrian or bus users.

An additional concern was also raised regarding possible vandalism near the bandstand area.

The Management Group considered that transport in the area was working well and any changes would also need to be discussed with the Caerphilly Access Group.

The Management Group took a vote on the issue and agreed that the proposal for a taxi rank on Castle Street Caerphilly not be supported.

Mr Couzens could however meet Mr Campbell should he wish to discuss any further alternative sites.

5. FACILITIES AT NEW POST OFFICE – CAERPHILLY ACCESS GROUP

Mr Jim Cooper (Caerphilly Access Group) gave a report on a recent visit to the new post office facility at W.H. Smiths.

The Manager of the shop indicated that further work was planned to the building which included a loop system, handrail and an intercom fitted into the lift. All the staff had been trained in the event of a fire and a safe area identified at the top of the first floor steps. A number of concerns/suggestions were outlined by Mr Cooper with the Manger including a small raised lip near the fire exit.

Mr Highway (Town Centre Development Manager) considered that the meeting had been a useful exercise for a member of the Access Group to discuss the new facility as the shop faced new challenges.

He reported however that it was disappointing that negative comments had been made in a recent letter to a newspaper on the facility as he had always observed that the staff were extremely helpful to their customers and that he was not aware of any formal complaint being received.

Finally it was suggested that as the premises had be altered to accommodate a post office and with a new Manager shortly to be appointed to the store, there may be some merit in discussing their risk assessment/ fire evacuation procedure with them. Mr Highway would make contact and copy in any correspondence to Mr Couzens.

6. MAINTENANCE OF THE MOAT – CADW

A representative from Cadw reported that although work is presently being progressed on the floodlights around the castle, there is a need to lower the level of the lake and clear the rubbish which has collected there and also removal of the silt. It is hoped that an application to lower the level of the lake will be agreed for the Autumn and then Cadw will be asking for volunteers to help.

Mr Highway indicated to the representatives from Cadw that he could arrange for a poster to be displayed in order to attract volunteers when appropriate.

7. CAERPHILLY FLOWER FESTIVAL FUNDING

Mr Highway outlined details of the Caerphilly Flower Festival to be held on the 27th and 28th June. The flower festival had been a considerable success since 2006 and had resulted in steadily increasing visitor numbers to the town. The festival is run in conjunction with the annual Wales in Bloom competition and it was reported that Caerphilly would this year also entering the Britain in Bloom competition.

This year even more churches and voluntary organisations had expressed a desire to be involved in the Festival.

The funding required to hold the event would come from various departments from within the council and the Caerphilly Town Council. A request was also made for funding from the Town Centre Management Group.

The Management Group endorsed the Festival and agreed to a contribution of £2,000 from the Community Forum Budget.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

8. RETAIL JOB CREATION – CAERPHILLY 2007

The report provided information on the number of jobs created and lost in Caerphilly Town Centre for 2007.

Mr Highway made reference to the statistics, which showed that 66 jobs were gained and only 38 were lost.

It was noted that an incorrect appendix had been attached to the agenda –the correct copy would be sent to members.

The Management Group noted the report.

9. FAIRTRADE EVENTS

Mr Highway outlined details of two events held in the Tourist Information Centre to launch and raise awareness of Fairtrade Fortnight.

Caerphilly is currently working towards attaining a 'Fairtrade Town' status and it was noted that four out of the five criteria to achieve this have already been accomplished.

It was also reported that a new organic cotton eco bag (to encourage people not to use plastic bags) is now available to purchase for £2.50 at the Tourist Information Centre.

The report was noted and thanks were recorded to Mr Highway for all his work in promoting Fairtrade in the Town.

10. CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE AUDIT – MARCH 2008

Details of the March Audit were noted and the following points raised:

11. PAGE 2 – TESCO FASCIA , CARDIFF ROAD

Members noted the desire by Tesco to improve the fascia of their building at Cardiff Road but accepted that with the general cut backs in the company this may not become a reality.

12. GRAFFITI IN THE TOWN CENTRE

This item was included on the agenda as a number of concerns had been raised on the current amount of graffiti in the Town Centre.

It was noted that racial and obscene graffiti is removed from buildings as quickly as possible. The Police in conjunction with the Youth Offending Services are currently scheduling the work for graffiti removal in the town although there are difficulties with the removal of graffiti from private buildings as damage may occur due to the aggressive method of cleaning necessary to remove graffiti.

The Police representative reported that last year a number of arrests had been made and investigations into the 'tag/signature' identification together with regular visits to the local schools had been successful in reducing the graffiti.

Recently however the problem has re-appeared and there is some graffiti in the town centre. It was noted that this item would be included on the Town Centre Audit and will therefore regularly updated and reported back to the Group. The Police representative also indicated that a report on the current situation would be obtained.

13. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 18th June 2008 at 2.00pm

The meeting closed at 3.40pm