



## CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 18TH MARCH 2009

**SUBJECT: RETAIL JOB CREATION, CAERPHILLY 2008 – FOR INFORMATION**

**REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides information on the number of jobs created and lost in Caerphilly town centre throughout 2008.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The attached Appendix gives details of every store opening and closing within Caerphilly town centre during 2008. The numbers of jobs created and lost are also provided for information. The Town Centre Development Manager compiled these figures during weekly town centre visits over the course of a 12-month period. It should be noted that they are as accurate as possible given the method of data collection.

### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Council has agreed to a ten-year regeneration programme entitled "The Smart Alternative". The proposals within the plan are based on 6 regeneration principles, one of which is "to re-establish town centres as a focus of economic activity".

### 4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 It has been a period of unprecedented turmoil in the global financial markets, leading to the old certainties regarding banking and financial services, being swept away. In turn, this has caused a worldwide economic downturn that has affected every retailer in the UK, both large and small, independent and multiple. These challenging market conditions have led to major names in the world of retail simply disappearing from our high streets, whilst others have been taken over by new owners. Even established retail giants have struggled to generate sales as customers have been forced to rein in their discretionary spending. The rise in the cost of living means that in real terms, today's shopper now has less money in their pocket to spend.
- 4.2 As a consequence of the global economic climate, it has been an extremely difficult year for retailers in Caerphilly town centre. The continued uncertainty over the redevelopment of a large area on the west side of Cardiff Road has resulted in a number of businesses either moving location, or closing down. Therefore, there are now a number of premises which remain vacant in the Cardiff Road area. However, there are aspects to Cardiff Road that have been more encouraging over the last 12 months. Several new businesses have opened up including; *Shoppysical*, *Caerphilly Nails* and *Wales Gas*. A new coffee shop – *Beanos Coffee House* at the northern end of the street has added greatly to the quality of the streetscape. Also, it has been extremely encouraging to see a number of retailers carrying out work to improve the interior and exterior of their premises. By far the biggest impact on the town in terms of job losses was the closure of the Woolworths store in December. The local store fell victim to the deeper problems of the Woolworths brand. Over recent years the retailer slowly lost touch with its core market as a big store in a small town, this resulted in a chain of events

that eventually led to the company being placed into administration after 99 years on the High Street. For a town the size of Caerphilly to lose a store such as Woolworths leaves a big gap in the retail offer.

- 4.3 Although the relocation of Post Office from the Twyn to Castle Court Shopping Centre led to an initial drop in footfall numbers in Cardiff Road, towards the end of the year the footfall figures significantly improved. This culminated in peak of 59,603 visitors recorded in Cardiff Road in the week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> December.
- 4.4 It has been a year of consolidation for the Castle Court Shopping Centre with the multiple retailers all-remaining as key tenants in the towns retail offer. One disappointment was the loss of the *Shoe Express* store in February due to the merger of several shoe retailers. Despite this, the centre retains a diverse retail offer that continues to attract large numbers of visitors from Caerphilly and the surrounding area.
- 4.5 The refurbishment of the Tourist Information Centre and its rebranding as *visitcaerphilly*, provides the town with a unique and attractive facility. This now serves both visitors and residents as an information point and also as a retail outlet.
- 4.6 There has been widespread support amongst all retailers, both national and independent, for the concept of Fairtrade. This led to the town being awarded *Fairtrade Town* status in November. This award offers the possibility to capture a wider customer base by appealing to a more ethically aware shopper.
- 4.7 Throughout the year, the focus through Town Centre Management and the Town Centre Improvement Group has been to create and sustain a town centre environment that is attractive to national retailers and encourages new independent businesses. The Town Centre Development Manager has worked to support retailers, supplying them with information about developments in the town and assuring them of the towns long-term future. A monthly *Town Centre News* has also been introduced to promote a sense of community amongst those who work in the town. This has been extremely well received by retailers.
- 4.8 One area of priority has been to maximise the established events programme as an opportunity to improve the shopping experience for town centre visitors. This years Flower Festival attracted coaches from towns in the West Country and the BIG Cheese recorded record numbers of visitors.
- 4.9 The figures in the Appendix show that 21 jobs were gained and 85 were lost in 2008; this was compared to 66 gained and 38 lost in 2007. It is encouraging to see new retail jobs being created even in these economic conditions. Amongst them are some good business ideas run by enthusiastic and experienced retailers. The world of retail in 2008 has been a difficult, the aim through Town Centre Management has been to react and respond to the new challenges in the sector and provide support and encouragement to retailers.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

## **6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no personal implications.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The report is submitted for the perusal and information of the members of the Caerphilly Town Centre Management Group.

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