



CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN PARK
ON WEDNESDAY, 16TH SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

C. Elsbury, S. Kent, M.H. Newman and Mrs. L. Williams

R. Davies – Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Countryside

Together with:

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

Also Present:

J. Stephens (Cadw), E. Talbot (CIRP), K. Williams (Clerk, Caerphilly Town Council), R. Williams (CRA), Mrs S. Cooper and J. Cooper (Caerphilly Access Group) and R. Gough (GAVO).

1. AIR QUALITY IN THE TOWN CENTRE

Mrs Maria Godfrey (Environmental Health Officer – Pollution Control) was attending the meeting to outline the developments in monitoring and addressing the concerns regarding air quality in Caerphilly Town Centre.

Maria explained that the Environmental Act 1995 had placed a duty on local authorities to monitor air quality. One area for monitoring with elevated levels of nitrogen dioxide (mainly from car fumes) within the town centre is White Street and part of Bartlett Street.

An assessment has been completed and an Action Plan will be developed from the findings. One reason identified for the high level of nitrogen dioxide is the large volume of traffic, although other factors such as the narrow road and the proximity of the high terraced houses also contribute to the problem.

An Air Quality Steering Group meeting held in March had made a number of suggestions made. A small technical group had subsequently considered if they were workable.

The next meeting of the Steering Group will be held on 7th October and any member of the Management Group can express an interest to attend.

Following a 12 week consultation, an Action Plan will be produced by February 2010 and then finally agreed by the Steering Group and submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government.

In response to a question Maria confirmed that there is no formal budget for this work although there are funding streams that can be accessed.

The volume of traffic using the area was also discussed and if any initiatives would be considered to reduce the number of vehicles using this route. Maria responded that it would be extremely difficult at present for an alternative route to be found especially for public transport.

Finally Maria confirmed that Claire Davies would be the contact while she is on maternity leave.

2. MINUTES

Subject to the correction that the Indoor Market Site would cost approximately £750,000 to refurbish, the minutes of the meeting held on 17th June were agreed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

3. Eisteddfod Arch (Minute No 8)

It was hoped that the official opening would coincide with next year's St David's Day celebrations.

4. TOP OF TOWN DEVELOPMENT

Mr Allan Dallimore reported that a recent bid had been made to the Strategic Capital Investment Fund (for £6m) from the Welsh Assembly in order to regenerate the top of town (approximately 40 premises would need to be acquired). A decision on the bid will be made in early Autumn.

Cllr Davies reported that there had been a lot of lobbying to convey the message that the area at the top of town needs to be regenerated and that he expected a decision on the funding bid to be made near the end of October. Should the bid be unsuccessful then a more small scale regeneration scheme could be considered.

5. CONDITION OF CO CO'S BUILDING (LAWRENCE HOUSE)

The owner was unlikely to progress a suggested proposal, as although planning permission had been granted for a building 'wrap' around the premises, it would need to be on a building for 2/3 years to make a financial return.

It was however reported that the appearance of the building had improved slightly since the tarpaulin had been removed and a number of artist pictures put on the windows.

6. FLOWER FESTIVAL

Mr Andrew Highway outlined a report on the success of the Caerphilly Flower Festival. The festival attracts a large number of visitors to the town and also forms an integral part of the preparations for the Wales in Bloom competition. This year the 'Kids go Wild' was an added attraction to encourage families to visit the town and a number of positive press cuttings were

circulated to the Group.

The programme for the 2010 festival will have a 1940's theme (when gardens were used more to grow fruit and vegetables to feed the family).

The Group fully supported the event and considered that certain departments of the council should also be encouraged to give their assistance (even in a difficult financial time).

It was agreed that a contribution of £3,000 be given to the 2010 Caerphilly Flower Festival from the Area Forum Budget subject to the remaining funding and support being found.

7. CHRISTMAS MARKET

Mr Paul Hudson gave details of the forthcoming Christmas Market week-end. It is expected that this year's market will be a very significant event with around 100 stalls attending.

It is envisaged that because of the expansion of the event there will be a need to close Cardiff Road to vehicles and a number of meetings will be held before the event to finalise these arrangements and facilitate alternative routes.

It was noted that local residents would be able to gain free access to the Castle on the week-end although other visitors would be charged. The Management Group considered that this policy discriminates between residents and visitors and it was agreed that **the Chairman write a letter to the Chief Executive of Cadw expressing the concern of the Group and asking for consideration that the castle be free for all persons on the week-end of the Christmas market.**

It was also agreed that a contribution of £3,000 be given from the Area Forum Budget to the Christmas Market 2009.

8. EVAN JAMES MEMORIAL

Mr Dallimore reported that the funding was now identified for the Evan James memorial and that a local wood carver (Rhys Harris) would be on site in mid October. It was suggested that a DVD could be made of the artist carving the art work and that consideration could be given to erecting a plaque near where he was born (at the Tourist Information Centre).

It was also suggested from Mr Stephens (Cadw) that there may be an opportunity to apply for funding from them.

9. MALCOLM UPHILL MEMORIAL

It was agreed that discussions would be held about the final design and wording of the plaque for the family of Malcolm Uphill to approve.

Funding was discussed and it was noted that a charity bike ride is held each year and this may be an opportunity to raise funding for the memorial through sponsorship. It was also noted that one of the original racing bikes is still in the vicinity (at Bedwas) and may be available for an official opening.

10. PROPOSED LIFE TRAIL/WELL BEING UNITS AT DAFYDD WILLIAMS PARK

Mr Simon Beacham reported that he had explored a number of funding streams, including

Stepping Out and GAVO, and was near to securing the total amount for the units.

11. FUNDING OF PARK BENCHES WITHIN THE CASTLE

Mr Ken Williams (Clerk, Caerphilly Town Council) reported that he had discussed and gained permission from Cadw for the Town Council to site two additional benches around the castle. The possibility of additional benches in the town centre was also discussed and although it was considered that there were probably sufficient. It was agreed that Mr Dallimore meet with Mr Williams on site to discuss this issue further.

12. DROPPED KERBS AT MORRISONS

It was noted that the concern regarding the one remaining dropped kerb at the Morrisons site is currently being addressed by them.

It was reported that a general survey of all dropped kerbs within the town centre area is being carried out by the council. The Management Group welcomed the survey as there seemed to be a number of concerns regarding insufficient dropped kerbs.

The representatives of the Access Group indicated that they would be willing to be involved in any work on the survey.

INFORMATION ITEMS

14. RETAIL SURVEY RESULTS

Mr Highway gave a power point presentation on the results of a recent retailers survey. A total of 150 surveys were sent out and 62 were returned.

The results of the survey will be used to indicate how the retailers view the recession, to understand how the retailers perceive their own future and to gauge the potential long- term impact of the recession on the high streets.

A number of questions were asked in the survey and the findings/conclusions of the survey were that :-

- All sectors of retail are experiencing a fall in sales.
- Retailers perceive that a number of factors are behind the recession.
- There is some fear over long-term job security.
- Retail is a happy sector to work in.

Mr Highway concluded by stating that town centres are more than just shops, but places for people to visit and reconnect with their community.

Copies of the presentation were available and it was confirmed that all retailers had previously received a copy.

Copies of the publication 'Town Centres, Unique Places' were also circulated to the Group.

15. CAERPHILLY TCIG AUDIT – SEPTEMBER 2009

The following items were discussed:

a) Bus Stop Kerb – O/S Castle Court Shopping Centre (Page 2) – Consultation document issued , when all responses are received drawings submitted to legal section and advertised.

b) Windows of Vacant Shops (Page 6)

Consideration being given to decal artwork being painted on the railway bridge at the southern end of the town.

c) Recycling Facilities in the Town Centre

Noted that 2 extra recycling facilities have been installed in the town centre.

d) Pedestrian Crossing, Cardiff Road

Mr Bob Campbell circulated figures from a pedestrian and vehicle survey taken on 11th August 2009. Members discussed the statistics and although the numbers crossing at the identified area were high because of the good visibility, the accident statistics were very low.

The Management Group agreed not to progress further the request to site a pedestrian crossing outside Beano's café, Cardiff Road.

16. **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 2nd December 2009 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 3.25 pm.