



CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT TREDOMEN BUSINESS CENTRE ON THURSDAY, 24TH NOVEMBER 2011 AT 2:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor J. E Fussell - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

C. Elsbury, S. Kent and M. J Prew

Together with:

Mr J. Couzens (Centre Manager, Castle Court), Mrs S. Cooper (Caerphilly Access Group), Mr. R. Gough (GAVO), Mr K. Robottom (CRA), Sgt Andy Down (Gwent Police), Mr. A. Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal & Conservation), Mr J. Elliott (Research Officer), Mr S. Hodges (Network Management Engineer), Mr A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), Mr S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager) Ms Jan Bennett (Advisory Services Group Manager) and Ms Jackie Dix (Policy & Research Manager)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Bevan (Chair), R. Davies, M.H Newman and Mr E. Talbot (CIRP), Insp. P. Staniforth (Gwent Police) and Mr Paul Hudson (Marketing and Events Manager).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

1 MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the Caerphilly Town Centre Management Group of 15 September 2011, which were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

2. UTILITY WORKS UPDATE

Steve Hodges (Network Management Engineer) reported that the utility works were now complete. He informed that all utilities provided forward planning of proposed works to the Council five years in advance. Duly advance notice was received of the recently completed gas works, which centred on Cardiff Road. Mr Hodges was satisfied with the efficient works conducted, especially considering it was on a single road with houses and businesses along side. The firm provided advertisement boards stating that Caerphilly town was still in

business, and also gave the length of time of the proposed works. Mr Hodges affirmed it was a huge benefit having a safe gas system installed which has longevity. The resurfacing contract will be done before the end of the financial year throughout the county borough.

3. CHRISTMAS MARKETS

Andrew Highway (Town Centre Development Manager) circulated a programme of Christmas events been held in the borough over Christmas. The Caerphilly Medieval Christmas Fayre is taking place 10th - 11th December 2011 and the Caerphilly River of Light Lantern Parade on 22nd December 2011 at 6.30 p.m. The Christmas events in the borough have been widely advertised by Capital Radio, Twitter, Facebook and through posters and banners. Caerphilly Town Council was thanked for their valuable donation of £1500 towards the advertising campaign.

4. REDEVELOPMENT OF THE TWYN POST OFFICE SITE

Allan Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal & Conservation) circulated a report on the redevelopment of the Twyn Post Office site. It noted that planning permission of the existing Post Office and the former Pavilion building has been granted. Main planning permission is anticipated following the Planning Committee on 7th December 2011. It was agreed that the Access Group would look over the proposals to ensure it is Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Compliant. Assuming Planning Committee and Cabinet approval it is anticipated that the demolition contractors will be mobilised early in the New Year. The contractor for the project will be Carter Lauren. This firm has recently completed another Council project – former Hanbury Road Chapel, Bargoed, now converted into the new library and Customer First Centre.

5. RETAIL SURVEY RESULTS

Andrew Highway circulated a report on the 'Town Centre Management Retail Survey 2011.' This is the third year that this survey has been done. The purpose of the survey is to give an indication of the level of optimism among retailers, and to see if perceptions are improving.

Across the town centres the highest response rate came from Caerphilly at 33%. The other town centres surveyed were Risca (24% of respondents), Blackwood (22% of respondents) and Bargoed (21% of respondents). Overall the survey found:

- Retail sales are falling less than in 2010, with many businesses seeing steady sales;
- Business optimism continues to grow for the second year in a row;
- Town Centre Management circulars continued to be valued by retailers;
- More businesses have an online presence, but only 30% trade online.

Cllr Fussell asked should there be an Endure Roadshow to get the word out on improving businesses. Jan Bennett (Advisory Services Group Manager) said this is taking place first in Risca and noted Cllr Fussell's keenness on rolling out in Caerphilly.

6. FUNDING APPLICATION STREET SCENE IMPROVEMENT IN CARDIFF ROAD

Allan Dallimore circulated a paper on the funding application to de clutter the town centre, with the aim to adopt a minimal approach to street signage, road markings, regulatory equipment and street furniture. A pilot has been done in Blackwood, which took out pedestrian barriers, and has received positive feedback.

In Caerphilly the most visible and immediate action that can be taken would be to reduce the amount of pedestrian railings in the town centre. These are concentrated on Cardiff Road, and their removal would significantly help reduce the level of street furniture 'clutter'. In addition, their removal would allow pedestrians/shoppers to make the movements that they wish to make across the main shopping street, helping pedestrian permeability. A plan was attached to the report outlining existing pedestrian barriers in the town centre that Officers believe could be removed/reduced without having a negative impact on pedestrian safety.

A group discussion took place on the 8 options for decluttering. It was agreed by the group that 1, 2, 4, 7 and 8 could go. Option 3 it was noted was in two sections and one section could be left for a flower display. Option 6 was also seen to serve a purpose with its flower display.

Cllr Fussell commented that decluttering could be done by taking out barriers but retaining bollards.

Mr Dallimore agreed to take the views from the committee on the options, and seek the views from the traders. Mr Dallimore will bring a further report to the committee prior to any work being carried out.

A sum of £3,000 has been set aside for this work. A request has also been made for a further £3,000 from the Caerphilly Area Forum.

7. CHRISTMAS RETAIL THEFT OPERATION

Sgt Andy Down noted the police are having a higher uniform presence in the run up to Christmas in the town. There will also be some plain-clothes police officers mingling with the crowds. Retailers will be receiving a letter from the police informing of what is being called 'Operation Arcade' across the borough. Police officers will be patrolling from 8am to 6pm. Cut outs of 7ft police officers will also be installed and moving around as a deterrent. Tough bail out conditions will be given to people convicted of committing theft. Sgt Down urged traders against inertia in dealing with retail theft. Houses will be searched of known offenders who steal to order. The new police station means it is now far easier to get out to calls in the town centre. The Chair gave thanks to the 'Caerphilly Against Crime' initiative supporting traders in the town.

8. CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE AUDIT

Mr Hodges to inform Clive Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager) in the Town Centre Improvement Management Group (28.11.11) that the bus stop on Castle Street needs addressing. Tackling air quality it was noted is an ongoing issue.

Mr Hodges commented that the illumination outside *Iceland* has been knocked down twice costing £4k. A bollard has now been placed there. A number of problems are caused by people, including vans, reversing into *Tesco*. It was suggested that evidence for prosecution could be gained from CCTV.

Cllr Kent raised that the Christmas tree at the Twyn Community Centre was causing problems with residents living nearby. Mr Dallimore agreed to look at the positioning of the tree and put a tactile sign on the handrail near the tree.

It was noted that on 1st December between 11-12 noon in the town centre there will be a *Fair Trade* 'bag for life' give away, and signing of the Climate Change Pledge by Caerphilly CBC.

The meeting concluded by Cllr Fussell wishing all a Happy New Year.