



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE ON FRIDAY, 7TH FEBRUARY 2014 AT 12:30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Councillors: P. Cook, N. Dix, K. James, C. Hawker, T. Williams

Together with:

Councillor D. T. Davies (Consultee), C. Erasmus (Town Councillor), Z. Hammond (Town Councillor), Inspector M Smith (Gwent Police)

Also:

A. Highway (Town Centre Manager), Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager), P. Hudson (Marketing & Events Manager), B. Campbell (Senior Assistant Engineer), G. Richards (Highways Maintenance Manager), A. Jones (Complaints Officer - Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

A. Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal & Conservation), J. Bennett (Group Manager Business Enterprise Support), Mr Edwards (Blackwood Retail Partnership)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES OF MEETING 25TH OCTOBER 2013

The previous minutes were taken as read.

4. POUNDSTRETCHERS UPDATE

Mr Highway advised the group that the owners of Poundstretchers are currently occupying 3 units in the Southern Retail Park and that the intention is for them to move back into the premises once it's rebuilt. The owners are waiting for the Insurance claim to be settled.

5. UNIQUE PLACES DISCOUNT CARD DEBRIEF

The report was presented to the group and Mr Highway advised that the main goal of the initiative was to raise the profile of the town, which was achieved.

Councillor Dix questioned the statistics from the questionnaire as the answers to the questions gave contradicting figures and wondered whether different questions could be asked in future. Mr Highway will take this back to the team.

Councillor James advised the group that this scheme is relatively new and has improved this year and will each year.

6. STUDS MARKING CROSSING POINT OUTSIDE ARGOS

Mr Dallimore sent his apologies. Mr Highway confirmed that the studs are now in place.

Councillor Dix also stated that posts are to be installed by the dropped kerbs to prevent people parking there

7. ADVERTISEMENTS ON THE HIGHWAY

Mr Richards presented the report to the group. The group were advised that the reasons for the report is to tidy up the town centre and highlight what is acceptable for retailers to display on the highway.

Letters have been distributed to 720 retailers throughout the borough. The letter sets out the size of the frames that are acceptable and the fee of £25.00 for retailers to sign up for a licence.

Councillor Dix asked for clarification as to who would be enforcing this issue.

Mr Richards confirmed that there are Highway Inspectors who will be inspecting on a monthly basis and will call out to deal with any matters brought to their attention.

8. JOBS REPORT

Members were presented with the report by Mr Highway it reveals that there are a number of vacant units throughout the town and he has been working with the Business Support Team to get retailers into the area.

The vacant Somerfield store is vacant at present and once ownership has been resolved things can progress further into utilising this unit.

Footfall figures have fallen by 2,500 but still a healthy figure has been recorded. The Town Centre Gazette has been made more user friendly

The shopwatch scheme run by the police has had a poor take up from retailers even though there has been no cost to date as the Town Centre Management Group funded the first year. Thanks were passed to the police for all their work on the shopwatch scheme.

Councillor Dix stated that whilst the town has lost a few shops there is some good news with the cinema coming to the town.

Mr Highway confirmed that the cinema is anticipated to open in May 2014. This is very good news for Blackwood and once established other retailers will see this as an opportunity. Also the programme that the Blackwood Miners Institute has since the refurbishment encouraged people to the town.

Inspector Smith asked Mr Highway if he could arrange for the cinema operator to contact him with regards to security issues.

Councillor Hawker asked where would people visiting the cinema park. Mr Highway confirmed that the Council car parks are free after 6 o'clock and as most people would be going in the evening to the cinema there would not be a problem with parking. Those going in the daytime would still find parking relatively cheap.

9. PLANNING APPLICATION – FORMER JUNIOR SCHOOL PENTWYN ROAD

Mr Stephens sends his apologies. Mr Highway informed the group that the planning application has been lodged to change the use to residential. Mr Stephens stated that he is happy to hear member's views.

Question was raised regarding the Community Garden to which Mr Dallimore was able to confirm that the Community Garden will remain.

10. ST DAVID'S DAY

Mr Hudson presented the group with the report for St David's Day. Previously this event attracted a lot of interest and is warmly received. The group were advised that this year the event falls on a Saturday. Normally schools play a big part at the event but this is difficult to organise on a weekend. Due to this the programme has required some adjustments and a smaller programme will be in place.

11. BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE AUDIT

Mr Campbell advised the group that the Council's Engineers sent out proposals for changing disabled places and the removal of single yellow lines from Twynyffald Street, White Street, Elgar Close and Grange Hill. These proposals are open for comments up to the end of February and has been distributed to all members, traders and emergency services.

Inspector Smith confirmed that there has been some minor antisocial behaviour at the bus station, which have been reported to the police by the security guard and subsequently dealt with. The next meeting is scheduled for the 21st May for the next problem, solving group.

There were no further issues on the audit.

Meeting closed 13:14.

CHAIRMAN