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Date: 9th October 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

A meeting of the **Blackwood Town Centre Management Group** will be held in the **Sirhowy Room, Penallta House, Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach** on **Friday, 16th October, 2015** at **2.00 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Chris Burns'.

Chris Burns
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A G E N D A

	Pages
1 To receive apologies for absence.	
2 Declarations of interest. Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution, and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.	

To receive and note the following minutes: -

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 3 Minutes of previous meeting 5th June 2015. | 1 - 4 |
|--|-------|

To receive and note the following updates: -

A greener place Man gwyrddach



Correspondence may be in any language or format | Gallwch ohebu mewn unrhyw iaith neu fformat

4	Choose the High Street Christmas Campaign.	5 - 10
5	Choose the High Street Past & Present - Analysis Report.	11 - 16
6	South East Wales Town Centre Vacancy Rates.	17 - 20
7	Town Centre Promotional Spaces.	21 - 24
8	Request for funds for defibrillators.	
9	Christmas Event Update.	
10	Red Lion Update.	
11	Blackwood Town Centre Audit - August 2015.	25 - 30

Circulation:

Councillors Mrs E.M. Aldworth, Mrs P. Cook, D.T. Davies, N. Dix (Chair), C. Hawker, K. James, A. Rees (Vice Chair) and T.J. Williams

Town Councillors Ms C. Erasmus, Ms Z. Hammond and Mr J. Hold (Clerk)

Other Organisations

Mr C. Cook, (Caerphilly Access Group)

Mr H.T. Edwards, (Blackwood Retail Partnership)

Mr A. Oldman, (Blackwood Shopping Precinct)

Inspector M. Smith, (Gwent Police)

Inspector M. Thomas, Gwent Police

The Manager, (Asda Blackwood)

The Manager, (Blackwood Library)



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE ON FRIDAY 5TH JUNE 2015 AT 2:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

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

Together with:

Councillor Z. Hammond (Town Councillor), Mr J Hold (Clerk), PS M Thomas (Gwent Police), Mr H Edwards (Blackwood Retail Partnership)

Also:

A. Highway (Town Centre Manager), S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager), P. Hudson (Marketing & Events Manager), A. Jones (Complaints Officer - Clerk)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Mr Highway opened the meeting and asked for nomination for Chair.

Councillor Dix was nominated and seconded. Councillor Dix accepted the position and thanked members for nominating him.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

Councillor Dix asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Councillor Cook was nominated and seconded. Councillor Dix accepted the position on behalf of Councillor Cook as she was running late – this was later confirmed with Cllr Cook when she arrived.

3. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors: D.T. Davies, E. Aldworth, C. Erasmus (Town Councillor), A. Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal & Conservation).

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PREVIOUS MINUTES OF MEETING (20TH MARCH 2015)

The previous minutes were taken as read.

6. STEPS BLACKWOOD GATE RETAIL PARK UPDATE

Mr Highway advised the group that Mr Dallimore passed on his apologies and provided the following update

The work to the steps has mostly been completed. There have been delays with the installation of the handrail and the repainting of lines in the car park, but these should be completed shortly. The litterbin and lighting elements are the final phase of the scheme, which are also due to be installed shortly.

The Chair advised the group that the works are a big improvement to this link to the town centre.

7. BEACH PARTY UPDATE

Mr Hudson informed the group that the 'Beach Party' event has been running for several years and is a unique event for Blackwood.

There are 14 banners throughout the Borough and 35,000 flyers have been printed and distributed around the County Borough and Gwent Valleys area to advertise the event. Flyers were also passed around the group.

Mr Hudson advised that the configuration of the 'Beach Party' has been changed so that the event will be more centrally focused; the 'urban beach' will be outside Tidal Stores. There are 28 stalls, donkey rides, funfair, dance groups and more.

The group were advised that on Facebook last week there were over 5000 views of the promotion for the event. Social media figures are very impressive and 600 people stated that they would be attending the event, with this figure increasing daily.

Footfall figures will increase on the day but Mr Highway advised that the Footfall camera is currently broken. Mr Hudson said they were looking into using temporary footfall counters at the events.

The Chair introduced Mr Edwards to the group and asked him what his thoughts were on the event.

Mr Edwards stated that it will be great for the town and even if visitors don't spend in the shops on that day, it will make them aware of what the town has to offer and attract them back in future.

Councillor James stated that the event is very popular and raises the profile of Blackwood and encourages people to come back.

The Chair asked Mr Hudson if shops have been consulted on the event. Mr Hudson advised that this has been done and the organisers have tried to position the rides outside shops that would be closed on the day.

The Events Team has tried to accommodate everyone and no negative feedback has been received.

Mr Hudson was thanked for his update.

8. RED LION UPDATE

Mr Highway advised that Planning officers have already written to the owner in the past requesting that the site be cleaned up. Tim Stephens (Head of Development Control) has asked if the group would like him to write to the owner again and ask what their intentions for the site are. Members agreed that this was the appropriate next step.

9. TOILET BLOCK UPDATE

Mr Highway conveyed an updated from Mr Dallimore who advised that a comprehensive programme is needed and that officers are monitoring the site.

As this building is privately owned the Council cannot do anything other than tidying the area periodically with the owner's consent.

The Chair advised that only if the building was structurally unsafe could we serve a Section 215 notice on the owner.

10. CLEANING OF ARTWORK

Mr Highway advised that the artwork does need cleaning and some of this work can be undertaken by NCS but the balustrade will need special treatment. The artist has been contacted and he has confirmed that he will be undertaking the cleaning of the lantern himself.

Mr Highway informed the group that the Highways Team are painting the railings by ASDA and have done an excellent job. The yellow marking on the steps are also being repainted.

Retailers in the town really appreciate the efforts of their hard work and the Chair requested that Mr Highway pass on the group's thanks for their work.

11. ROAD CLOSURE UPDATE

PS Mark Thomas advised that at the meeting that took place regarding the closure of the road on Thursday nights it was agreed that this will remain in force and be reviewed again in October 2015.

The Chair thanked PS Mark Thomas and requested that thanks be passed back to the Special Constabulary for their work to close High Street each Thursday evening.

12. CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET PAST & PRESENT

Mr Highway presented a PowerPoint presentation to the group on the progress of the "Choose the High Street Past & Present" campaign.

Members were advised that Mr Wilcox has been working with the local schools to participate in the artwork displays. The group were advised that officers had met with pupils from Blackwood Comprehensive who pitched their ideas for new businesses on the High Street as part of a Business Studies course. Councillor James stated that he went along and it was good to hear the pupils' ideas.

The 'street galleries' have been well received – since the photo boards were displayed in local shop windows people have expressed an interest in purchasing them.

The photos in the street galleries are available on the CCBC website, Flickr Page and exhibitions will take place in libraries in each town.

Mr Highway thanked Mr Wilcox for all of his hard work. Mr Highway also thanked Mr Hold for the photographs he provided

Cotton bags have been handed out in libraries to promote the campaign and a competition to win shopping vouchers has been launched.

The Chair thanked Mr Highway and Mr Wilcox for their report.

13. BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE AUDIT – APRIL 2015

Mr Highway advised that there were two issues he needed to bring to members' attention. The first was in respect of an incident outside Peacocks in the Market Place. The group were advised that a set of bollards had been demolished when a vehicle crashed through them into the store, causing extensive damage. The Police confirmed that this was not a ram raid and that the person had been arrested and there is an ongoing investigation. The driver is currently receiving treatment.

There were 3 bollards destroyed as well as the shop window. Officers have checked on the ownership of these bollards and can confirm that they are the responsibility of The Market Place Shopping Centre who will be looking to replace them. Peacocks is expected to re-open in the next few days.

The second item is that there have been complaints about people congregating and drinking around the bench by the bakery at the top of Gravel Lane.

PS Mark Thomas advised that the police have increased the number of calls to the area and the Community Safety Wardens have also been going out more frequently to disperse the groups and all will continue to monitor the problem.

The group were advised by PS Mark Thomas that there is going to be a Public Space Protection Order going to Cabinet in July, which will enable more powers move people on.

Mr Highway presented the audit report and advised that in respect of the site of the Poundstretcher building, brief discussions have taken place with the architect with regards to a new retail scheme on the first floor. The Head of Development control is aware of this.

Mr Highway has been requested by the manager of ASDA to thank Lyndon Ross and his team for dealing with the rat problem so promptly.

The cleaning of toilets in the Interchange Bus Station work was carried out promptly by Tony White's team and the Group passed on its thanks.

There were no further issues raised on the audit

The meeting closed 14:58.

CHAIR



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 16TH OCTOBER 2015

SUBJECT: 'CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET' CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides information on the 'Choose the High Street' Christmas campaign, which will be run in the County Borough's five principal town centres in the weeks leading up to Christmas 2015.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In 2015, the 'Choose the High Street' initiative will once again feature a Christmas campaign directed towards encouraging people to spend in their local town centres over the festive period. Retailers across the five managed town centres will have the opportunity to submit an offer to be included in a printed voucher booklet. The scheme is designed to support local businesses by offering them the opportunity to participate in a coordinated campaign under the 'Choose the High Street' banner.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Council has agreed to a five-year regeneration programme entitled "People, Business and Places". The proposals within the strategy are based on a number of regeneration principles, one of which is "Strengthening Town Centres".
- 3.2 'A Prosperous Caerphilly' is identified as one of the key outcomes in the Council's 'Single Integrated Plan'. The Implementation of the Unique Places model of Town Centre Management in the County Borough's principal town centres is one of the actions identified to achieve this outcome.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Over the last three years, in the lead up to Christmas the Council's Town Centre Management Team has run a discount scheme in various formats as a way to assist local retailers generate sales in the lead up to Christmas. Last year, a printed voucher booklet was introduced under the 'Choose the High Street' banner. This booklet proved very popular with the public and retailers alike and so will be replicated again this year. The overall aim of the scheme is to help local businesses capture consumer spend during this crucial trading period. Retailers in the five managed town centres will have the chance to submit an offer for inclusion in the booklet with the level of discount being set by the retailer at their discretion. However, the onus remains on the retailer to participate and ensure that their offer is strong enough to incentivise customers. The scheme is free for all retailers and as in previous years any retailer in the County Borough who expresses a wish to participate will also be included.

To support the campaign a number of different marketing platforms will be utilised these include:

- Newspaper adverts
- Social media engagement on the Council's *Facebook / Twitter* accounts;
- A *YouTube* video will be produced by Council's Communications Team;
- Article in the Council's *Newsline* which is delivered to every household in the County Borough;
- Dedicated web page on the CCBC corporate website.

The voucher booklets will be give out in a number of locations in each of the five town centres including:

- Caerphilly: Library / Customer First Centre / Visitor Centre / Whetherspoons - The Malcolm Uphill;
- Blackwood: Library / Customer First Centre / Blackwood Miners Institute / Tidal Stores / Maxime Cinema;
- Bargoed: Library / Customer First Centre
- Risca: Library / Customer First Centre;
- Ystrad Mynach: Library.

4.2 In addition, every school in the County Borough will be offered a supply of Voucher booklets.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the council's EqIa process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The campaign is funded through the Town Centre Management core budget.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 This report is for information only.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Andrew Highway, Town Centre Development Manager
Consultees: Pauline Elliott, Head of Regeneration & Planning
Cllr. K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable
Development
Allan Dallimore, Team Leader Urban Renewal
Paul Hudson, Marketing & Events Manager
Hayley Lancaster, Senior Communications Officer
Steve Wilcox, Assistant Town Centre Manager

Appendices:
Appendix 1 'Choose the High Street' Christmas Voucher Booklet Cover

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CHRISTMAS

Retail Vouchers

Talebau Manwerthu

Y NADOLIG



Choose the
HIGH STREET
Town Centres • Unique Places

Dewiswch y
STRYD FAWR
Canol Trefi • Mannau Unigryw

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BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 16TH OCTOBER 2015

**SUBJECT: CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET 'PAST & PRESENT' – ANALYSIS
REPORT**

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report provides an overview of the 'Past & Present' initiative which was run over the summer months by the Council's Town Centre Management team.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This summer, a new element to the successful 'Choose the High Street' campaign was launched. 'Past & Present' focused on re-establishing people's connection with their local town centre. The initiative consisted of library exhibitions in each of the five managed town centres, street galleries of historic photos displayed in shop windows and online *Flickr* galleries of archive photos.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Council has agreed to a five-year regeneration programme entitled "People, Businesses and Places". The proposals within the strategy are based on a number of regeneration principles, one of which is "Strengthening Town Centres".
- 3.2 "Prosperous Caerphilly" is identified as one of the key outcomes in the Council's "Single Integrated Plan". The Implementation of the *Unique Places* model of Town Centre Management in the County Borough's principal town centres is one of the actions identified to achieve this outcome.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The 'Choose the High Street' - Past & Present campaign ran for five months from April – August inclusive and focused on two areas. Firstly, the past element used archive photographs to evoke memories and re-established people's connection to a particular place. Secondly, through asking people to think about why they choose the high street, people were encouraged to appreciate and value their town centre in the present day. The overall objective of the initiative was to encourage people to invest economically, socially and emotionally in the future of their town centres.
- 4.2 The aims of the scheme were:
- (a) To maintain town centre footfall over the summer period;
 - (b) Improve people's sense of connection with their local town;

- (c) Generate renewed interest in town centres as a location for business;
- (d) Encourage retailers to participate in the life of the town centre;
- (e) Increase footfall in town centre libraries;
- (f) Engage with local schools.

4.3 Library Exhibitions

4.3.1 As part of the initiative five exhibitions were held in town centre libraries, these featured historic photos of the town centre, artwork by local schools, car sticker and shopping bag giveaways, as well as the chance for local people to win high street shopping vouchers. The entry form for the competition included three questions:

1. "I choose the high street because..."
2. If someone wants to start a new business in xxx town centre what should it be?
3. In addition to shops what other facilities would you like to see located in the town centres?

4.3.2 Question 1 - Some of the reasons people gave for choosing the high street were:

- "It's central to where I live"
- "To meet friends have a chat & get out of the house"
- "It's convenient"
- "I like the personal touch"
- "Diverse range of small shops"
- "Easy bus routes"
- "Sense of community"
- "Less stressful than travelling into the city"
- "I like to shop in actual shops"
- "Close to home and I like the personal touch and friendliness"
- "Supports local business and is accessible"
- "Feel the quality of potential purchases"
- "Park easily, access local amenities & chat to old friends"
- "Its historical"
- "Parking is easier"
- "I haven't got a car"
- "It promotes small independent business"
- "I value meeting and talking to people"
- "Atmosphere / Good vibe"
- "Local people need jobs"
- "Staff are very polite"
- "Walking distance from my home"
- "Its familiar and I meet people I know"
- "It's the best"
- "I can walk into town"
- "More friendly and has the personal touch"

4.3.3 Question 2 - Businesses that respondents felt were missing from the various town centres were:

- **Ystrad Mynach** – Clothes shop, shoe shop, antiques/second hand shop, electrical shop, child-friendly restaurant.
- **Bargoed** – Sports shop, fashion shop, hardware – store, newsagent, stationer, shoe shop, indoor market, children's clothing shop, bakery, mobile phone shop, book/DVD shop, more national retailers, veterinary surgery.
- **Risca** – Gym, clothing shop, baby shop, drycleaners, gardening/hardware/DIY store, coffee lounge, toy shop, internet café, cocktail bar, family pub restaurant with children's play area, knitting wool shop, haberdashery, Jewellery/make up store, craft shop, fish mongers, national frozen food retailers.

- **Blackwood** – butchers, men’s & women’s clothing shop, specialist food shop, electronic recycling shop, children’s play centre, homeware/kitchen shop, arts & crafts shop, bakers and greengrocers.
- **Caerphilly** – bookshop, ladies & men’s clothing shop, small supermarket, DIY store, butchers/delicatessen, toy shop, vegetarian café, Welsh organic food shop, holistic therapist, cinema and baby shop.

4.3.4 Question 3 - The final question was included at the request of the Council’s Strategic Planning Team and forms part of the wider consultation process on the new Local Development Plan.

Number of Entry Forms for the High Street Voucher Competitions				
Ystrad Mynach	Bargoed	Risca	Blackwood	Caerphilly
6	15	35	17	62

4.3.5 The five exhibitions took place as follows:

- Ystrad Mynach - April (two weeks)
- Bargoed - May (four weeks)
- Risca - June (four weeks)
- Blackwood - July (four weeks)
- Caerphilly – August/September (eight weeks)

4.4 Canvas Shopping Bags

4.4.1 The Council supports Welsh Government’s long term commitment to reduce the amount of single use carrier bags. A total of 5000 ‘Choose the High Street’ - Past & Present canvas bags were given out free across the five town centres and also in the Urdd Eisteddfod. The provision of these canvas shopping bags encourages shoppers to use a reusable bag, rather than buy a new plastic one.

4.5 Street Galleries

4.5.1 ‘Street Galleries’ were set up in each of the five town centres prior to the exhibitions. Each Street Gallery comprised of a series of black and white photos from the Council’s Winding House archive, these were displayed in shop windows throughout each town centre. The images were printed on Foamex board in an A3 format and set in a picture frame design.

4.6 Social Media

4.6.1 The Council’s Social media platforms *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Flickr* and *YouTube* were all utilised in various ways to raise awareness of the scheme and in particular to generate interest in the library exhibitions.

4.7 Web Site

4.7.1 A dedicated page for the Past & Present initiative was created on the Councils web site. The page attracted 1,753 views over a five month period (Data correct 22nd September 2015).

4.8 Flickr

4.8.1 The increasingly popular social media portal Flickr was used to show whole albums of historic photographs.

Flickr Gallery Data					
	Ystrad Mynach	Risca	Caerphilly	Blackwood	Bargoed
Photo with Highest No: of Views	Merged Photo – Bedwlyn Road	Merged Photo – Palace Cinema	Merged Photo – Cardiff Road	Merged Photo - Zaks	Merged Photo – Hanbury Square
	719	718	705	858	685
<i>Data correct 1st September 2015</i>					

4.9 **Schools Involvement**

- 4.9.1 Local Primary Schools were encouraged to get involved in the exhibitions by submitting children's artwork. The number of schools who actually took part was disappointing, with only artwork from Ty Sign Primary School in Risca being displayed.
- 4.9.2 At Blackwood Comprehensive School, as part of their Business Studies Course, students entered a 'Dragons Den' style competition to find the best new business idea. Many of these ideas related to businesses that could potentially be started up on Blackwood High Street. A short YouTube film was made by the Council's Communications Team in which a number of the students and their teacher explained how the potential new businesses could work in Blackwood town centre.

4.10 **Urdd Eisteddfod**

- 4.10.1 During the Urdd Eisteddfod, Town Centre Management took space within the Council's corporate marquee to promote the 'Choose the High Street' brand and explain the 'Past & Present' initiative. The event was seen as an important opportunity to highlight to visitors the individual character of each of the five principal towns and encourage them to visit the town centres whilst staying in the area for the Urdd Eisteddfod.

4.11 **Conclusion**

- 4.11.1 The 'Past & Present' initiative succeeded over a five month period in helping to re-establishing many peoples sense of connection with their local town centre. The library exhibitions were visited by large numbers of people and very well received; with a number of local residents requesting to buy the photos and maps displayed (these were provided on request at no cost).
- 4.11.2 The questionnaires which were completed provided a number of important pieces of information. It was particularly encouraging to read the positive reasons why people choose to shop on their local high street. Some of the key themes which emerged were: the desire to support local businesses, the convenience of the town to where people live and the importance of the social aspect of visiting a town centres. The businesses that people indicated they would like to see return to the high street showed that there is a still an appetite for more traditional retail outlets which have been lost as the retail sector has evolved. These responses identified some potential gaps in the retail offer in the town centres, which will assist officers as they work with new start-up businesses.
- 4.11.3 The Street Galleries proved to be extremely popular with retailers who enthusiastically engaged with the initiative and displayed photos prominently in their shop windows. Many commented on the positive responses that the photo had drawn from their customers.

4.11.4 The only disappointing aspect to the initiative was the lack of participation by local Primary Schools despite strenuous efforts by officers to encourage schools to become involved. However, the work with pupils at Blackwood Comprehensive as part of a Business Studies course offered an unexpected opportunity to engage pupils in the debate about how high street evolve in the future.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the council's Eqla process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The campaign is funded through the Town Centre Management core budget.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 No there are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 This report is for information only.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Andrew Highway, Town Centre Development Manager
Consultees: Pauline Elliott, Head of Regeneration & Planning
Cllr. K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development
Allan Dallimore, Team Leader Urban Renewal
Rhian Kyte, Team Leader Strategic Development & Planning
Hayley Lancaster, Senior Communications Officer
Nick Rutter, Website Editor
Paul Cook, Team Leader Sustainable Development & Planning
Steve Wilcox, Assistant Town Centre Manager
John Poyner, Connecting Communities Manager

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BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP - 16TH OCTOBER 2015

SUBJECT: SOUTH EAST WALES TOWN CENTRE VACANCY RATES

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides information on the property vacancy rates within principal town centres across South East Wales, compared with Caerphilly County Borough's figures.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report gives details of the percentage of vacant units within principal town centres across South East Wales, including Caerphilly County Borough's principal towns. The report also provides information on the proactive steps that the Council's Town Centre Management Team takes to keep the number of vacant units low.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Council has agreed to a five-year regeneration programme entitled "People, Businesses and Places". The proposals within the strategy are based on a number of regeneration principles, one of which is "Strengthening Town Centres".
- 3.2 "Prosperous Caerphilly" is identified as one of the key outcomes in the Council's "Single Integrated Plan". The implementation of the *Unique Places* model of Town Centre Management in the County Borough's principal town centres is one of the actions identified to achieve this outcome.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 Model of Town Centre Management

- 4.1.1 The Council's model of Town Centre Management – "Unique Places" – aims to enhance and maintain the principal town centres by focusing existing Council and partner organisations budgets and resources on issues affecting the town centres. These resources are redirected by using the Environmental Audit process, which is considered by the Town Centre Improvement Group. The results are town centres that look and feel well-maintained for visitors and businesses alike.
- 4.1.2 Unique Places also utilises a variety of platforms to actively market and promote the principal town centres. Examples of this marketing include lamp column banners, business window stickers and investment portfolios.

4.2 Vacancy Rates Across South East Wales

4.2.1 Vacancy rates within Caerphilly County Borough's town centres are collated and monitored by the Council's Strategic Planning department. Data from neighbouring Authorities is also collected (when available) for comparison analysis purposes.

4.2.2 The current vacancy rate data for Caerphilly County Borough's towns and comparable town centres in other Local Authority areas are outlined in the table below:

Town	Local Authority Area	Vacant Units (%)	Survey Date
Abergavenny	Monmouthshire	5	October 2014
Porthcawl	Bridgend	8	2013
Cowbridge	Vale of Glamorgan	8	2014
Caerphilly	Caerphilly	9	October 2014
Risca	Caerphilly	9	October 2014
Chepstow	Monmouthshire	9	October 2014
Aberdare	Rhondda Cynon Taf	9	January-March 2015
Pontypridd	Rhondda Cynon Taf	9	January-March 2015
Ystrad Mynach	Caerphilly	10	October 2014
Ebbw Vale	Blaenau Gwent	11	April 2015
Barry	Vale of Glamorgan	11	2014
Maesteg	Bridgend	12	2013
Blackwood	Caerphilly	14	October 2014
Bridgend	Bridgend	14	2014
Porth	Rhondda Cynon Taf	14	January-March 2015
Merthyr Tydfil	Merthyr Tydfil	16	April 2014
Mountain Ash	Rhondda Cynon Taf	18	January-March 2015
Tredegar	Blaenau Gwent	19	April 2015
Tonypandy	Rhondda Cynon Taf	19	January-March 2015
Bargoed	Caerphilly	22	October 2014
Abertillery	Blaenau Gwent	23	April 2015

4.2.3 Based on the data above, it can be seen that three of Caerphilly's town centres (Caerphilly, Risca and Ystrad Mynach) are in the 10 lowest ranking towns for vacancies. These three towns also have vacancy rates below the regional average of 13%, with Blackwood only slightly above at 14%.

4.2.4 In an attempt to keep vacancy rates as low as possible, a variety of methods are utilised as part of the Town Centre Management function.

4.3 Retail Property Directory

4.3.1 One aspect of the Town Centre Management process is the Retail Property Directory, which is an online directory that lists all of the properties for sale or to let in the managed town centres. This resource is used to direct potential new businesses to Caerphilly County Borough's town centres and allow existing businesses to look at additional or larger premises in which to expand. The overall aim of the Directory is not only to attract new businesses, but to keep vacancy rates within our town centres as low as possible by filling units quickly.

4.4 Town Centre Improvement Group & Environmental Audit

4.4.1 The Town Centre Improvement Group (TCIG) is an Officer-based working group, which meets every eight weeks, with a primary objective to act as a mechanism of action. The TCIG comprises of representatives from various departments including: Highways, Planning, Cleansing, Environmental Health, Parks and Regeneration. Managers who attend the TCIG have staff and budgetary responsibility enabling them to make key decisions within the meetings.

4.4.2 The town centre Police Inspectors and the Town Centre Management Group Chairs attend the TCIG. The TCIG meetings revolve around an Environmental Audit for each town, which is compiled by Town Centre Management. The audit contains problems and issues within each town centre for which the Council and partner organisations have responsibility. The Audit process ensures that the Council's commitment to maintain, enhance and develop each town centre is conducted in an accountable and transparent way. The Environmental Audit also provides a record for town centre stakeholders.

4.5 Investment Data

4.5.1 The Town Centre Management Team has paid for a variety of investment data for each of the managed towns to support potential businesses. The data includes Drivetime Maps (which show the population figures within a 10, 20 and 30 minute journey radius), CACI Market Summary Reports (these show each town's demographic and its place in the "retail hierarchy") and the Experian FootFall electronic pedestrian counting system data.

4.5.2 In addition to the detailed investment information, each town centre has been given its own brand, giving the town centres and the businesses therein a sense of place and identity. The branding assists in identifying each town as a unique place within the County Borough, making it stand out to potential business investors.

4.6 Lamp Column Banners

4.6.1 In each of the managed town centres, lamp column banners are placed on street lighting columns within the principal town centre boundary. The banners are not only to look attractive and add to the vibrancy of our town centres, but serve to make drivers and pedestrians aware that something has changed along their route – they are now in the heart of one of our town centres.

4.6.2 The lamp column banners are primarily generic welcome designs, but each town centre has a bespoke set of banners that bear its individual branding. Banners are also produced for regular events (such as The BIG Cheese in Caerphilly) and for long-term campaigns such as "Choose the High Street" (see below). A large stockpile of designs has been established over time, which allows for each banner design to be displayed in each town centre just once every few years, adding to the vitality that they bring. At present, the banners are displayed for 9-months of the year, with three changeovers per annum. The banners are removed during the winter months to protect them from inclement weather and allow for the Christmas illuminations to be erected.

4.7 "Choose the High Street" Campaign

4.7.1 In 2014, the "Choose the High Street" campaign was launched by Town Centre Management. Intended to be a long-term campaign, the initiative aims to encourage shoppers to "choose the high street" for at least part of their weekly shop and for businesses to "choose the high street" rather than opening in out-of-town locations.

4.7.2 As part of "Choose the High Street", a "Pop-up Shop Guide" was created. This short and simple guide provides advice on how to open a short-term business in a vacant commercial unit. The intention behind the guide is to support businesses or community schemes that want to test the market before making a long-term commitment to a shop unit. Whilst it is hoped that a short-term use would prove successful and become long-term, even a short-term use adds vibrancy to a town centre. A pop-up shop is also beneficial to landlords as it provides a tenant and highlights their property to potential long-term tenants.

4.7.3 During Christmas 2014, another element to the campaign was added with the "Choose the High Street @ Christmas" voucher booklet. This customer loyalty scheme attempted to encourage local spend in the vital Christmas period, with retailers invited to participate. The voucher booklet was given out free to the public in the weeks leading up to Christmas and tried to support local businesses during the busy Christmas trading period to reduce potential business closures and increase footfall in the town centres.

4.8 Town Centre Events

- 4.8.1 Each year, the Council's Events & Marketing Team stages summer and winter events in each of the town centres. Not only do the events add an element of diversity and vibrancy to the town centres, but they also promote the towns to people who may not otherwise visit. This promotion is invaluable in increasing footfall to support existing businesses, but also to highlight Caerphilly County Borough's town centres to potential new businesses.

4.9 Conclusion

- 4.9.1 The economic climate continues to prove very challenging for businesses within our town centres. Although the Local Authority cannot prevent businesses from closing, by taking the proactive steps outlined above to look after our town centres, support existing businesses and attract inward investment from new businesses, Caerphilly County Borough Council will strive to keep its town centre vacancy rates as low as possible.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes only, so the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report as the activities outlined are incorporated into existing budgets.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personal implications associated with this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been incorporated into this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

10. STATUTORY POWER

- 10.1 Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Steve Wilcox, Assistant Town Centre Manager
Consultees: Pauline Elliott, Head of Regeneration & Planning
Cllr. K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development
Allan Dallimore, Team Leader Urban Renewal
Andrew Highway, Town Centre Development Manager
Rhian Kyte, Team Leader Strategic & Development Planning



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP - 16TH OCTOBER 2015

SUBJECT: TOWN CENTRE PROMOTIONAL SPACES

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides details on the promotional spaces within the managed town centres, which are commercially rented by Town Centre Management.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following consultation with several internal departments, Town Centre Management has had approval to create promotional spaces within each of the managed town centres. The spaces are hired commercially to companies, charities and community groups for the promotion of events, causes or services. All income generated is used to offset the cost of the Town Centre Management function as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Council has agreed to a five-year regeneration programme entitled "People, Businesses and Places". The proposals within the strategy are based on a number of regeneration principles, one of which is "Strengthening Town Centres".
- 3.2 "Prosperous Caerphilly" is identified as one of the key outcomes in the Council's "Single Integrated Plan". The implementation of the *Unique Places* model of Town Centre Management in the County Borough's principal town centres is one of the actions identified to achieve this outcome.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 In 2011, an internal working group called the "Streetscene Inception Group" (SIG) was established to look at several factors across our town centres, including creating a café culture and introducing dedicated promotional/event spaces within each of the town centres. The group consisted of Officers from Urban Renewal, Town Centre Management, Licensing, Legal, Highways and Transportation.
- 4.2 Upon agreement to introduce promotional spaces within the town centres, the following locations were agreed as suitable sites:
- Blackwood – "The Dragon Circle" area between ASDA supermarket and Blackwood Retail Park;

- Caerphilly – The area at the foot of the steps to The Twyn Community Centre, adjacent to The Twyn Car Park;
- Risca – The newly created event space within Tredegar Grounds Park.

4.3 Since the initial three locations, two additional sites have been incorporated:

- Bargoed – Hanbury Square on the new public realm;
- Ystrad Mynach – Siloh Square on Bedwlwyn Road.

4.4 In order to make the sites fit for purpose, some adaptations needed to be made. These works included the installation of removable bollards in Blackwood and the installation of a pop-up feeder pillar (electricity supply) in Blackwood and Caerphilly. Feeder pillars and bollards were also included in the works schedule for the schemes in Bargoed and Risca. At present, there is no feeder pillar in Ystrad Mynach. The cost of these works was covered by the central Urban Renewal department's budget.

4.5 Once the site locations were agreed, a set of terms and conditions was drafted by the SIG. The purpose of these terms was to control the use of the sites and to protect the Authority against any damage or personal injury caused by the site users. The terms have been revised as needed and a copy of the current terms and conditions is attached as Appendix One.

4.6 Following approval by the SIG, control and management of the sites was passed to Town Centre Management and Urban Renewal. A booking process was then developed by Town Centre Management. The booking process consists of users completing a booking form, signing the aforementioned terms and conditions and sending a copy of their Public Liability Insurance and a risk assessment for the proposed activity.

4.7 The promotion of the sites, availability queries and all aspects of the booking process are currently carried out by the Assistant Town Centre Manager post-holder and form part of the overall Town Centre Management function.

4.8 To date, a wide variety of users have booked the site. These have included local companies promoting their business, charities raising awareness of current causes, national companies (such as Talk Talk) advertising their products and services and community groups running family-friendly activities. The sites are also used by internal CCBC departments; for example, the St. David's Day concerts take place on the sites, Cleansing has utilised the sites to encourage recycling and Social Services have promoted their Volunteering Service.

4.9 At present, there is a charge of £50 per day to use the site, which is reduced to £25 if the user is a registered charity. This fee is extremely competitive compared to neighbouring town and city centre promotional sites, which has made CCBC's sites very popular, particularly with national companies. The cost of hire is reviewed at the start of each financial year and may need to be increased in line with reduced budgets as part of the Council's MTFP.

4.10 During the 2013/14 and 2014/15 financial years, income generated by hiring the sites was used to complement the existing Town Centre Management function by paying for items such as lamp column banners or the Christmas discount voucher booklet scheme, once the costs of maintaining the sites had been covered. However, since April 2015, the income generated has been used to offset the cost of the Town Centre Management department in line with the MTFP.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report is for information purposes only, so the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Since April 2015, the revenue generated from renting the promotional spaces in the town centres has been used to make a saving against the cost of running Town Centre Management as part of the Council's MTFP.
- 6.2 The cost of maintaining the sites is covered by the Town Centre Maintenance Budget, which is held by the Urban Renewal department. All costs associated with the in-built power supplies are paid by the core Town Centre Management budget.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personal implications associated with this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been incorporated into this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

10. STATUTORY POWER

- 10.1 Local Government Act 2000.

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Andrew Highway, Town Centre Development Manager

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BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE AUDIT – AUGUST 2015

DATE	ISSUE	DEPARTMENT	PROGRESS UPDATE
02/10/13	<p><u>Poundstretcher Site</u> <u>High Street</u> Officers continue to work with Poundstretchers in an attempt to rebuild the store and enable the retailer to return to the town centre.</p>	<p>Town Centre Management <i>Andrew Highway</i></p>	<p>PLEASE SEE PREVIOUS AUDITS FOR A FULL HISTORY OF THIS ISSUE</p> <p>5/6 An update was provided to the TCMG. 16/6 The building's owner is working with an architect to look at the option of residential on the first floor, with retail on the ground.</p>
16/05/14	<p><u>Toilet Block Enhancement</u> <u>High Street</u> At the TCMG, it was agreed that proposals would be developed to try and improve the appearance of the disused toilet block on High Street. Should the proposals be approved, the Area Forum Budget may fund the scheme.</p>	<p>Urban Renewal <i>Allan Dallimore</i></p>	<p>PLEASE SEE PREVIOUS AUDITS FOR A FULL HISTORY OF THIS ISSUE</p> <p>14/4 No money is available and the building is privately owned. Options continue to be looked at. 5/6 An update was provided to the TCMG. 16/6 No funding has been identified as the building is in private ownership.</p>
04/09/14	<p><u>Rat Problem</u> <u>ASDA, Cliff Road</u> The ASDA store manager has complained of a rat infestation on the Council-owned steps leading from the Miners' Institute to the retail park.</p>	<p>Environmental Health <i>Lyndon Ross</i></p> <p>Parks Services <i>Derek Price</i></p>	<p>PLEASE SEE PREVIOUS AUDITS FOR A FULL HISTORY OF THIS ISSUE</p> <p>14/4 Baiting and monitoring is ongoing. 5/6 An update was provided to the TCMG. 16/6 No further problems have been reported. Issue Closed 16/6</p>

23/01/15	<p><u>Choose the High Street – Past & Present Town Centre</u></p> <p>The next phase of the Choose the High Street campaign will start in 2015. Entitled ‘Choose the High Street - Past & Present’ the campaign will aim to reconnect people with their local town centre.</p>	<p>Town Centre Management <i>Andrew Highway</i></p>	<p>PLEASE SEE PREVIOUS AUDITS FOR A FULL HISTORY OF THIS ISSUE</p> <p>5/6 An update was provided to the TCMG. 16/6 This element of the campaign will continue over the summer. The Library exhibitions have been well-received to date.</p>
04/02/15	<p><u>Street Sign Resetting Gordon Road</u></p> <p>A street sign on Gordon Road is damaged and one of its legs requires resetting.</p>	<p>Highways <i>Gavin Barry</i></p>	<p>14/4 A repair will be carried out in due course. 16/6 The repair is due to be done within 10 days.</p>
04/02/15	<p><u>Cleaning of Artwork Gordon Road</u></p> <p>The artwork outside the Library has mould forming on the glass panels and the surrounding area requires cleansing.</p>	<p>Urban Renewal <i>Allan Dallimore</i></p>	<p>14/4 The artist has been asked to advise on how to clean the artwork. 5/6 An update was provided to the TCMG. 16/6 NCS will be completing some basic cleaning, but the artist has asked to do the more complex aspects himself.</p>
04/02/15	<p><u>Repainting of Benches and Bollards Woodbine Road</u></p> <p>The paintwork on the benches and bollards on Woodbine Road is worn and damaged, which requires repainting.</p>	<p>Highways <i>Gavin Barry</i></p>	<p>14/4 The work has been added to the summer repainting schedule. 5/6 An update was provided to the TCMG. 16/6 The work has been done. Issue Closed 16/6</p>
20/03/15	<p><u>Retailer Security Briefing Maxime Cinema, High Street</u></p> <p>Gwent Police Officers are arranging a security briefing for retailers on 14th April. The briefing is being delivered by Special Branch and will make retailers aware of potential terrorist activities.</p>	<p>Police <i>Ins Williams</i></p> <p>Town Centre Management <i>Andrew Highway</i></p>	<p>14/4 The event is taking place on 14th April. 16/6 The event was well-attended and informative. Issue Closed 16/6</p>

15/04/15	<p><u>Removal of Road Closure High Street</u> Police Officers are in the process of reviewing the Thursday night road closure of High Street that was introduced to deter car cruisers. As part of the review, the views of CCBC Officers, Local Members and the Town Council will be considered.</p>	<p>Police <i>Ins Williams</i></p> <p>Town Centre Management <i>Andrew Highway</i></p> <p>Transportation <i>Clive Campbell</i></p>	<p>15/4 A meeting was held at Blackwood Police Station on 14th April where all parties were given an opportunity to express their views. After discussion, it was agreed that the Order would remain in place but that a review would be undertaken in 6 months. 16/6 The road closure will be ongoing over the summer, but will be subject to another review in the future. Issue Closed 16/6</p>
15/05/15	<p><u>Banner Changeover Town Centre</u> The banners on the street lighting columns will be installed during May throughout the town centre.</p>	<p>Town Centre Management <i>Andrew Highway</i></p>	<p>16/6 The changeover has been carried out. Issue Closed 16/6</p>
20/05/15	<p><u>Programme of Painting North of the Town Centre</u> A programme of works has been agreed for the Highways "Two Man Team" to repaint the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The railings outside Blackwood Miners' Institute; • The railings/steps linking ASDA with High Street; • The railings by the "Dragon Circle" near ASDA. 	<p>Highways <i>Gavin Barry</i></p>	<p>16/6 All of the work has been completed. Issue Closed 16/6</p>
05/06/15	<p><u>Damage to The Marketplace Town Centre</u> At the TCMG, it was reported that an incident had taken place in The Marketplace, which involved a vehicle damaging street furniture and the Peacocks store.</p>	<p>Police <i>Ins Williams</i></p> <p>Town Centre Management <i>Andrew Highway</i></p>	<p>16/6 The bollards do not belong to CCBC, but have been ordered by The Marketplace.</p>

05/06/15	<p><u>Underage Drinking</u> <u>The Marketplace/Gravel Lane</u> At the TCMG, concern was expressed in relation to young people congregating on a bench at the top of Gravel Lane whilst drinking alcohol and taking part in antisocial behaviour.</p>	<p>Police <i>Ins Thomas</i></p> <p>Community Safety <i>Kath Peters</i></p>	16/6 PCSOs and CSWs are regularly monitoring the area.
17/06/15	<p><u>Repainting of Double Yellow Lines</u> <u>Bus Station Pay & Display Car Park</u> The double yellow lines alongside the car park are worn and require repainting.</p>	<p>Highways <i>Gavin Barry</i></p>	
22/06/15	<p><u>Damage to Properties</u> <u>High Street</u> During the weekend period, some young people gained access to the flat roofs of several properties, which subsequently caused internal damage to some of the properties.</p>	<p>Regulatory Planning <i>Tim Stephens</i></p> <p>Community Safety <i>Kath Peters</i></p> <p>Police <i>Ins Williams</i></p> <p>Town Centre Management <i>Andrew Highway</i></p>	
24/06/15	<p><u>Antisocial Behaviour</u> <u>The Marketplace/Gravel Lane</u> A number of complaints have been received in relation to a group of males congregating on the bench at the top of Gravel Lane. The men are drinking and being intimidating to passers-by. There have also been reports of suspected drug use.</p>	<p>Police <i>Ins Thomas</i></p> <p>Community Safety <i>Kath Peters</i></p> <p>Licensing <i>Myra McSherry</i></p>	

06/07/15	<p><u>Litter Problems</u> <u>Blackwood Retail Park</u> Cllr. Rees has received complaints in relation to Blackwood Retail Park. The bins on the park are overflowing and a large amount of litter has started to accumulate on the site.</p>	<p>Town Centre Management <i>Andrew Highway</i></p>	<p>14/7 Contact has been made with the new owners of the retail park, who have agreed to start cleaning the site regularly again.</p>
10/07/15	<p><u>Repainting of Bollards</u> <u>High Street</u> The paint on the bollards in the car park access lane next to New Look has become worn and damaged.</p>	<p>Highways <i>Gavin Barry</i></p>	
03/08/15	<p><u>Banner Changeover</u> <u>Town Centre</u> The banners on the street lighting columns will be installed during August throughout the town centre.</p>	<p>Town Centre Management <i>Andrew Highway</i></p>	
04/08/15	<p><u>Japanese Knotweed</u> <u>The Marketplace Shopping Centre</u> Japanese Knotweed has started growing in The Marketplace at the top of Gravel Lane, which needs treatment.</p>	<p>Countryside Services <i>Phil Griffiths</i></p>	

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