



BARGOED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN PARK ON WEDNESDAY, 3RD JUNE 2015 AT 4.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

H.A. Andrews, D.T. Davies, A. Higgs, K. James, D. Price, K. Reynolds

Together with:

H. Llewellyn (Town Councillor), D. Morgan (Town Councillor), A. Collis (Town Councillor),
J. Bissex (Community Councillor)

Also:

Inspector Muirhead (Gwent Police), Mr. Peter Collins (Bargoed Chamber of Trade),
A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre
Manager), A. Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal), A. Jones (Clerk)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

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

Councillor D. T. Davies was nominated and seconded. Councillor Davies accepted the position.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

Councillor Davies asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Councillor D. Price was nominated and seconded. Councillor Price accepted the position.

3. APOLOGIES

Councillors: D. Carter, V. Stephens (Town Councillor), P. Hudson (Marketing & Events Manager).

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (11TH MARCH 2015)

Previous minutes were taken as read.

6. CINEMA UPDATE

Cllr Keith Reynolds provided the group with the following update on the cinema, which will be released in the press at 5pm on the 3rd June 2015:

The Council's aspirations to attract a cinema operator to the town began with initial plans for a cinema back in 2010; these had to be revised last year when it became clear that the costs of the scheme were in excess of the funding available.

Over the past year the Council has been working to re-design the scheme to make it commercially viable. Unfortunately, the current cost estimates are that the scheme would cost around £8.4 million. Although the Council had committed £1.9m to the scheme along with a contribution from the developer, this still leaves a shortfall of at least £1.5m in the project. As a result the project is unable to proceed.

The Council will now explore alternative uses for the development site.

Councillor Reynolds said, "To date we have invested around £90 million in various regeneration led projects for Bargoed thanks to significant Welsh Government and European funding contributions. These include numerous land reclamation schemes, the new Bargoed by-pass and a variety of town centre projects designed to bring business and jobs into the town.

Some of the major schemes have been the refurbishment of the Hanbury Chapel as a new library and Customer First Centre, the opening of a new Morrisons superstore and a number of other new retail units; improvements to car parking; an improved park and ride facility near the railway station; relocation of the Council's Contact Centre into part of the former Woolworth's store and over £9 million worth of improvements to the general environment of the town.

I am disappointed that the cinema project has not been able to proceed, but we will continue to press on with plans to build on the success of the regeneration strategy for the town".

The Chair thanked Councillor Reynolds for providing the statement to the group and then informed the group that the decision has been made by Odeon, which is disappointing and that a meeting has been requested with members to discuss going forward. The date of the meeting was confirmed to take place on the 11th June with members and the Chief Executive.

The Chair stated that the timescale is a concern and also that the area is not left in its current state. He confirmed that plans for the site would be discussed at the meeting.

Councillor Collis expressed his disappointment at the news and stated that the whole regeneration programme was built around leisure and he would like to ensure that this is still the case.

Members of the group also expressed their disappointment and although they were not surprised by the news, they wished that the announcement could have been made sooner.

Mr Dallimore informed the group that officers were also disappointed, as they have worked hard. Officers would now need some time to assess the viable alternative options for the site.

The Chair thanked officers for all of their hard work and thanked the Leader for informing this group before the update was released in the press.

7. UNIT SHOPS UPDATE

Mr Dallimore advised that Units 5 & 6b are up and trading as Greggs and Subway. A “Shop Jacket” coffee shop decal has been installed on the windows of Unit 7. There is an offer in at present in respect of Unit 4.

Officers are working to find a tenant for Units 1&2, but this has been delayed whilst the prospective retailer is engaged in a takeover proposal. The initial period has been delayed by a further three-months at the request of the Competition Commission. Councillor Price asked how much of the three-month period has elapsed. Mr Dallimore advised that the additional period is due to end in October 2015.

The Council and its agents are working to secure two other retailers – this work is still ongoing and will ensure that there are alternative options for the units.

Mr Dallimore advised that further discussions need to take place at Bargoed Project Board to widen the market scope. Officers and agents have been offering incentive packages to attract businesses.

Mr Highway advised the group that at present retailers are spending less and trying to find retailers to open new businesses is very difficult, using retail property agents is the best way to proceed. The group were assured that the agents and officers are working together to follow up every opportunity to secure tenants.

Members expressed concern as to whether businesses would no longer be interested, as the cinema is not going there.

Mr Highway stated once the anchor store is secured, the expectation is that more businesses will follow.

The Chair thanked officers.

8. HJJJ UPDATE

Mr Dallimore advised that now the building has been demolished restoration work needs to be undertaken on the gable end of neighbouring properties. At present the design is being tweaked to ensure minimum disruption to tenants.

Works are 3 weeks behind schedule due to utilities work. The anticipated completion date is 10th July 2015.

Members asked where funding was coming from. Mr Dallimore advised that it was European funding which must be drawn down by the end of June.

9. BARGOED STREET WORKS & POCKET PARK UPDATE

Mr Dallimore informed the group that works are progressing well. The artwork base is installed but that there had been some concern about the gas main beneath, however there were no problems and the foundations are now in place.

The daffodils are due to be installed this week and the artist will be bringing his team to carry out the work. The installation should be completed within a few hours.

The feature granite wall will be finished within the next few days. Six trees will be added to create a more attractive area.

Mr Dallimore advised that the Lowri Plaza works are between 70% and 80% complete. The installation of the bollards will be last part of the programme and locations have been agreed. There will be 21 bollards in total. The programme is due to be completed by mid to late June.

10. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT UPDATE

Mr Dallimore apologised for not being able to prepare a written report for the meeting. The Group were advised that work has been completed to CC Sports and other shops. The Chair has requested that a letter of thanks be sent to all shops that have had works carried out under the scheme

The Chair asked if there was any underspend in the funding that could be made available for other shops. Mr Dallimore advised that all paperwork needed to be completed by the end of June to comply with the European funding regulations, so timescales would be too tight for other businesses to apply.

There may be further European funding available under the Cohesion programme, but it is unlikely that it will be focussed on town centre improvement programmes.

The Chair thanked Mr Dallimore.

11. CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET PAST & PRESENT

Mr Highway presented a Power Point 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 '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.

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

12. ICE RINK UPDATE

Mr Highway passed on Mr Hudson's apologies and read out the following update:

A provisional quote has been received from an ice rink contractor to stage an ice rink under cover, therefore saving on marquee and flooring costs. The quote, although not binding, would indicate that the event could be run at a reduced cost compared to last year, potentially making it viable with support from the Council's new Community Match event fund and from the Bargoed Town Council.

Confirmation on how the new funding scheme is going to run is awaited from Finance.

A letter has been sent to Morrisons requesting support from them to allow the Ice rink to be staged in their underground car park and they have verbally responded (this week) that they will support the event. We await confirmation of this agreement via e-mail from the store manager.

Once received, we will start to work on a legal agreement and start the process of tendering for an ice rink contractor and to support a request for internal funding from the aforementioned scheme.

13. FOOTFALL DATA ANALYSIS BARGOED TOWN CENTRE

Mr Highway presented his report to the group. The group discussed the positioning of the cameras and raised questions as to whether the cameras were in the right places as it was identified that pedestrians can come in and out of the town and not necessarily pass either camera.

Members discussed that there is a definite difference in footfall figures from the North side of the town to the South side.

Mr Highway advised that it is anticipated that footfall will improve once the unit shops are all let.

The Chair thanked Mr Highway for his report.

14. COMMERCIAL USE NORTHERN END OF BARGOED UPDATE

Members discussed the North of the town centre and it was suggested that vacant units could be used to relocate officers who are vacating Pontllanfraith House.

Councillor Reynolds advised that the Authority is looking at all viable options for relocating staff.

15. BARGOED TOWN CENTRE AUDIT – APRIL 2015

Mr Highway presented the audit and the follow items were discussed.

Councillor Price queried as to when the steps on Hanbury Road would be dealt with. Mr Dallimore advised that at present the works would not be carried out due to costs. The Chair advised that this was not acceptable and asked that the work be carried out as soon as possible. Mr Dallimore confirmed that he would look to see if there are any funds available from the town centre budget.

Councillor Price advised that the notice board key has not been handed over and has requested that officers arrange for it to be passed to the Town Clerk.

Mr Dallimore advised that the flooding in Riccis café was found to be from construction debris in the drainage channels, which has now been cleared.

Members discussed with Inspector Muirhead the parking issues and limited waiting bays.

Inspector Muirhead advised the group that the Police have been present to educate by enforcement and he was hopeful of an improvement. Police have been instructed when they go through town to issue tickets.

Mr Dallimore informed the group that contractors are due to replace the double yellow lines shortly this will also be a deterrent to drivers who illegally park.

There were no further issues raised on the audit.

The meeting closed at 17:51

CHAIR