



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16TH FEBRUARY 2016

SUBJECT: TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT GROUP 2015

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information on the progress made within the Town Centre Improvement Group during 2015 against the Council's objectives.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report will provide information on the work undertaken by the Town Centre Improvement Group during 2015. It will highlight how the Group works alongside the Council's five Town Centre Management Groups and outlines some of the issues that have been resolved in each of the five principal towns. An accompanying Appendix contains a full list of the issues resolved in 2015 by the Town Centre Improvement Group using an Environmental Audit process.

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 Town Centre Improvement Group was established in 2005 with appropriate representation from all relevant service areas.
- 4.2 The remit of the group is to:
- Improve the environment within the five principal town centres: Caerphilly, Blackwood, Bargoed, Risca and Ystrad Mynach;
 - Benchmark the performance of CCBC services in the five town centres;
 - Demonstrate the commitment of CCBC as an authority to the environmental improvement of the five town centres;
 - Provide an internal forum for CCBC to address issues that blight town centres.

- 4.3 The group includes representatives from all the relevant parts of the Council, in addition to the five Police Inspectors whose responsibilities include the town centres of Bargoed, Blackwood, Caerphilly, Risca and Ystrad Mynach.
- 4.4 The purpose of the Town Centre Improvement Group is to ensure that there is a responsive and co-ordinated approach to the maintenance of the town centres through the process of an Environmental Audit. In addition, the Town Centre Improvement Group addresses items raised within the meetings of the five Town Centre Management Groups.
- 4.5 The work of the Town Centre Improvement Group should be seen as complementary to the five Town Centre Management Groups, ensuring that environmental and maintenance matters, which are the responsibility of CCBC, are addressed in an effective and expeditious manner.
- 4.6 In 2015, a total of 168 issues across the five town centres were actioned through the Town Centre Improvement Group (TCIG). This Group's strength continues to be built on a mindset of collaborative working across Council departments, providing a forum for officers to exchange information. An outline of some of the issues resolved by the TCIG in each of the five managed town centres is shown below. It provides an overview of the scope of the work examined in the audit process and highlights the group's role in resolving them.

4.7 **Caerphilly**

Rough Sleepers – Community Safety / Police / Town Centre Management

Throughout the town centre instances involving homeless persons were an issue of concern to businesses, residents and local members. To address the problem a multi-agency group was established which built on the existing relationships forged in the TCIG meetings.

Tesco Site - Town Centre Management

Tesco's decision to close its Cardiff Road store meant that a prime site in the town would be left vacant. Town Centre Management provided updates at the TCIG meetings to inform colleagues on their work to secure a new tenant and to discuss the various issues relating to the vacant site. This helped ensure that the building remained in good condition as prospective tenants viewed it.

Park Lane – Urban Renewal

The Council's demolition of the buildings in Park Lane provoked widespread interest from the community and amongst local members. The TCIG provided a platform for officers to share information on the sites future and also a method to track updates for the Town Centre Management Group.

4.8 **Blackwood**

Summer Beach Party – Events Team

The town centre events program is designed to provide retailers with increased sales opportunities. Prior to the staging of the event a number of Council departments and the Police are involved in the planning and preparation. The TCIG meeting helps officers understand the impact that an event with a full road closure may have on their service area.

Programme of Painting Works - Highways

A programme of works was agreed for the Highways "Community Response Team" to repaint a number of key areas in the town centres. The work plays an essential part in keeping the five managed town centres well maintained so that they are attractive places for people to visit and for businesses to trade in.

Inappropriate Usage of the Market Place- Police / Community Safety / Licensing / Transportation / Urban Renewal / Cleansing / Town Centre Management

Following complaints from retailer's, a local landlord and the shopping centre manager, Town Centre Management worked to facilitate a dialogue between the appropriate Council departments. The various elements in this issue included the inappropriate use of a public bench, cleaning of the bus station toilets, sale of alcohol and monitoring of CCTV cameras.

4.9 **Bargoed**

BIG Idea - Regeneration Scheme – Urban Renewal / Planning / Transportation / Highways / Town Centre Management

The TCIG has given officers not directly involved in the works regular updates on the progress of the cinema project, letting of the unit shops, demolition of HJJ Building and construction of the 'Pocket Park'. The aim has been to encourage an exchange of information to assist in managing the change.

Parking Issues – Police / Urban Renewal

Within the new public realm scheme, parking remains a significant issue. At the TCIG meetings, officers have engaged directly with the local Police Inspector in order to best utilise their limited resources to enforce parking restrictions. The Police and Council officers have also considered a number of different public realm solutions.

Cigarette Ends - Cleansing

A complaint was received in relation to the collection of cigarette ends along the new kerb lines throughout the town centre. One of the primary functions of the audit process is to show how issues, which are the Council's responsibility, are dealt with both effectively and quickly.

4.10 **Risca**

Fallen Tree in Tredegar Grounds Park - Parks

Following a particularly severe storm, a tree was uprooted in the park and was left blocking the main footpath. The issue was highlighted at the Town Centre Management Group so that members and the Community Council were aware that the Parks officers would expedite the trees removal.

Weekend Opening of Toilet Block - Cleansing

The Town Council agreed to fund the opening of the facility at weekends to enable users of the park to have access to the toilets outside the core opening hours provided by the Council's Cleansing section. The issue was brought to the meeting to make other departments aware of the new arrangement.

Renovation of Risca House Inn – Regulatory Planning / Highways

During extensive refurbishment works to the property it was noticed that the level of the adopted Highway adjacent to the building had substantially altered. The Environmental Audit was used to coordinate the Planning process with the necessary Highways works.

4.11 **Ystrad Mynach**

Parking Issues – Police

Since Gwent Police discontinued its Traffic Warden Service all of the town centres have experienced parking problems. The TCIG has enabled officers to engage directly with the local Police Inspector to utilise Police Community Officers to enforce parking restrictions.

Review of Town Centre Traffic Order - Transportation

Following a request by the Police, various aspects of the Traffic Regulation Order for the town centre were reviewed. At the TCIG, officers engaged with the Police Inspector to identify the revisions in the Order which would assist Police Community Support Officers in their traffic enforcement duties.

Maintenance Issues Siloh Square – Parks / Cleansing / Urban Renewal

Gelligaer Community Council raised a number of issues in respect of Siloh Square. As these were the responsibility of a number of different service areas the audit was used to ensure that each separate issue was addressed, being mindful that due to a single location the issues were interlinked.

4.12 **Town Centre Issues**

Attached is an Appendix containing a detailed breakdown of all the issues resolved in each of the town centres over the past twelve months. This is evidence of the commitment of individual service areas and shows the diverse nature of problems addressed by the group.

The objective in 2016 is to continue to provide a high level of service in the principal town centres whilst accepting the constraints of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The challenging situation within the wider UK economy continues to place significant pressure on all retailers, particularly independents. The low levels of consumer spending mean that jobs within the retail sector remain at risk as national retailers continue to rationalise their store portfolios. The aim for the TCIG and the process of Town Centre Management is to promote sustainable long-term economic growth across the County Borough by delivering well-maintained and managed town centres which are at the heart of the local community.

5. ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

- 5.1 Through the TCIG a number of additional projects have been achieved which have added value to the street scene and have offered a visible improvement to the town centres. Many of these have tackled specific issues and sought to resolve long-term problems, which may have proved difficult for departments to work through without this collaborative approach and the support of other officers.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Community Assets Budget which is used for work in the five town centres remained at £20,000 in 2015 / 2016 following its reduction from £40,000 in 2014 / 2015. The Enhanced Maintenance Budget, which is used in part for work in the five town centres, again remained at its previous level of £18,000 following a significant reduction from £96,000 in 2014 / 2015. The Council's commitment to its MTFP means that both these budgets will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis. It should be noted that the reductions in both these budgets have limited the ability of the Council to react to requests for town centre maintenance works and means that proactive improvement projects can no longer be undertaken.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct personnel implications, although the "Community Response Team" from the Engineering Services Division, funded through the Community Assets Budget, continues to be an important asset to the process of improving the appearance of the town centres.

9. CONSULTATIONS

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

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To inform members of the work of the Town Centre Improvement Group.

11. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

11.1 For members to note the report and the progress made against the corporate objectives.

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Andrew Highway, Town Centre Development Manager
Consultees: Cllr. K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development
Cllr C. Forehead, Chair of Caerphilly Town Centre Management Group
Cllr D.T Davies, Chair of Bargoed Town Centre Management Group
Cllr N. Dix, Chair of Blackwood Town Centre Management Group
Cllr N. George, Chair of Risca Town Centre Management Group
Cllr A. Angel, Chair of Ystrad Mynach Town Centre Management Group
Cllr D.T Davies, Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Chris Burns, Chief Executive
Christina Harrhy, Corporate Director Communities
Pauline Elliott, Head of Regeneration & Planning
Tony White, Refuse & Cleansing Officer
Rhodri Lloyd, Special Projects Officer
Lyndon Ross, Senior Environment Officer
Kath Peters, Community Safety Manager
Clive Campbell, Transportation Engineering Manager
Gavin Barry, Assistant Engineer
Myra McSherry, Licensing Manager
Derek Price, Parks and Outdoor Facilities Manager
Simon Beacham, Area Parks Officer
Tim Stephens, Development Control Manager
Allan Dallimore, Team Leader – Urban Renewal
Steve Wilcox, Assistant Town Centre Manager
Steve Pugh, Communications Manager
Paul Hudson, Marketing and Events Manager
Inspector G. Jones (Caerphilly)
Inspector J. White (Blackwood / Risca)
Inspector I. Muirhead (Bargoed / Ystrad Mynach)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Matrix of Issues Resolved Across the Five Town Centres