



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 26TH FEBRUARY 2016

**SUBJECT: 'CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET' CHRISTMAS VOUCHER BOOKLET
2015– ANALYSIS REPORT**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides information on the 'Choose the High Street' Christmas Voucher Booklet scheme, which ran across the County Borough's five principal town centres in the period leading up to Christmas 2015.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides details of the 'Choose the High Street' Christmas Voucher Booklet scheme that was implemented by the Town Centre Management team over Christmas 2015. Included in the report is information as to how the scheme was operated, the numbers of retailers participating, marketing platforms used, along with feedback from questionnaires sent out to participating businesses.

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 Each year in the lead up to Christmas, the Council's Town Centre Management team runs a scheme which provides local retailers with the opportunity to take part in a coordinated marketing campaign. This year's scheme once again comprised of a Christmas Voucher Booklet in a similar format to last year. The booklet contained 105 offers across the five managed town centres which was an increase of 15 on the previous year. The aim of the scheme is to help retain consumer spend within the County Borough's town centres during the festive trading period. In 2015, the length of the scheme was extended from three to six weeks in response to feedback from retailers and customers (16th November - 31st December 2015).

4.2 This year's booklet was once again produced by the Council's Graphic Design team and was redesigned to accommodate the increased volume of offers received. The new style booklet incorporated a brief description of each town centre, a map showing the location of the five managed towns and adverts promoting different Council departments. These included the work of the Fostering Service and Community Safety Wardens, an advert for the campaign against the sale of illegal tobacco and highlighting the support offered to residents who are over 50 as part of Welsh Government's 'Aging Well in Wales' initiative. There were also pages listing the town centre Christmas events programme.

4.3 The scheme was officially launched on 5th November at The Maxime Cinema in Blackwood where local school children from Blackwood Primary School joined the Cabinet Member Cllr James, the cinema manager and Father Christmas for a launch photo followed by a special film screening.

4.4 Marketing Platforms

4.4.1 To support the campaign a number of different marketing platforms were utilised including:

- Newspaper advert in Cardiff & South Wales Advertiser;
- Advertorial pages in the Caerphilly Observer;
- Social media engagement on the Council's Facebook / Twitter feeds;
- A YouTube video
- Articles in the Council's Newslite publication, which is delivered to every household in the County Borough;
- Dedicated web page on the CCBC corporate website including a PDF version of the booklet.

4.5 Caerphilly Experience

4.5.1 In order to reach a wider audience an additional marketing promotion was run through Wales Online's social media platforms and website. The 'Caerphilly Experience' competition featured donated prizes and a PDF version of the booklet to promote the offers.

- Cadw – A family seven day Explorer pass;
- Llancaiach Fawr – Family tour of the manor house;
- Bargoed Ice Rink – Family ticket to skate;
- Blackwood Miners Institute – Family ticket to a performance;
- Caerphilly Visitor Centre - Hot drink and a pastry for a family;
- The Harp Inn - Three course meal for a family;
- A replica Miner's Lamp donated by The Winding House.

4.5.2 Data from the Wales Online social media channels and website was analysed at the end of the competition period. A summary can be found below. It is worth noting that the industry standard click-through rate is 0.07%, with anything between 1% and 3% being considered good, this campaign achieved an impressive 10.51% click-through rate.

Ad Impressions	12,190
Unique Browsers	5,714
Click-throughs	1,281
Click-through Rate	10.51%
Number of Entries	38

4.6 Production and Distribution

4.6.1 A total of 35,000 Voucher Booklets were produced, with distribution being carried out by the Council's Community Safety Wardens.

The following locations displayed Voucher Booklets:

- Caerphilly: Library / Customer First Centre / Visitor Centre / Wetherspoons - 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;

In addition, primary schools in the County Borough were supplied with Voucher booklets. In total, 20 schools requested booklets for their pupils and staff, these were delivered using the Council's courier service.

4.7 Supermarket Distribution

4.7.1 For the first time the Town Centre Management team reached an agreement with local supermarkets to distribute the booklets to their customers. Receptacles were used to display the booklets in the foyers of ASDA Blackwood and also Morrisons in Caerphilly & Bargoed.

4.8 Retailer Participation

4.8.1 The table shows the number of retailers taking part in the scheme compared to those in the previous years. This evidences the year on year growth in retailers participation of the scheme.

Town Centre	Number of Offers in 2015	Number of Offers in 2014	Number of Offers in 2013	Number of Offers in 2012
Caerphilly	31	29	26	24
Blackwood	32	26	24	20
Bargoed	20	23	21	14
Risca	8	6	4	5
Ystrad Mynach	10	2	4	N/A
Offers in other towns	4	4	1	1
Total	105	90	80	64

4.9 Retail Engagement

4.9.1 The Town Centre Management team made visits to numerous retailers across the five town centres explaining the scheme and encouraging participation. Once again a number of businesses from outside the managed town centres expressed an interest in joining the scheme and were accommodated in the 'Offers in Other Towns' section of the booklet.

4.10 Retailer Survey

4.10.1 A survey was sent out to all retailers who participated in the scheme and the results are shown in the table below. A total of 86 surveys were sent out and 31 returned, giving a response rate of 36%.

4.10.2 A summary of the responses can be found below:

Question	Yes	No
1. Was the "Choose the High Street Christmas Voucher Booklet" beneficial to your business?	48%	52%
2. Did the voucher booklet bring new customers?	42%	58%

3. Do you think schemes such as this highlight the importance of shopping locally?	Yes 87%	No 13%
4. Did you feel that the scheme was well-publicised?	Yes 48%	No 52%
5. Would you consider taking part in a discount scheme in the future?	Yes 83%	No 17%
6. If yes, would you revise your offer in any way?	Yes 32%	No 68%

4.10.3 The take up of offers in individual businesses varied considerably, as has been the case in previous years. The number of vouchers redeemed varied from zero to 25 per day. It was apparent that the quality of the offers received was better than in previous years, which was reflected in the fact that only 36% of respondents reported having no vouchers redeemed compared to 41% last year. The average number of vouchers redeemed was around 5.

4.10.4 Generally, the responses were more positive than in previous years. However, the biggest change was to the responses in question 3. In 2014 only 47% of respondents felt that the scheme highlighted the importance of shopping locally, this year that figure dramatically rose to 87%.

4.10.5 It is positive to note that despite the varying success of the offers amongst participating businesses, 83% of respondents would consider taking part in the scheme if it were run again. This high volume suggests that retailers see not only the transactional value, but also the free promotional benefit of being part of the scheme. Those who said they would revise their offer in the future generally said that they would give a different/larger level of discount.

4.11 Conclusion

4.11.1 The 2015 version of the Christmas Voucher booklet was the most successful to date and continued to build on the success of previous years. Importantly, the scheme as a whole took some significant steps forward which improved it. The number of offers from local retailers increased for the fourth year in a row demonstrating how retailers are willing to participate in the scheme. Of note was the more competitive nature of many of the offers, showing that retailers have a growing appreciation of how savvy customers shop at Christmas.

4.11.2 The redesigned booklet was more visually appealing and included adverts to support other Council services enabling the booklet to support some of the wider 'Improvement Objectives' of the Council's Corporate Plan.

4.11.3 The extension of the scheme's duration in response to feedback from customers and retailers appeared to increase the number of vouchers which were used.

4.11.4 Perhaps the most important change to the scheme was the expansion of the voucher distribution network which was achieved by partnering with local supermarkets. The link up with the supermarkets enabled display stands containing hundreds of Voucher Booklets to be sited in the store foyers providing thousands of people each day with the opportunity to pick up a booklet.

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 was 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.

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