



CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE ON TUESDY 1ST MARCH 2016 AT 5:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Councillors: P. J. Bevan, J. Fussell, K. James, B. Jones, S. Kent, M. Prew, J. Pritchard.

Together with:

Mrs. J. Hibbert (Town Councillor), Mr. K. Williams (Clerk - Town Council), Sgt. S. Greening (Gwent Police), Mr. K. Robottom (Caerphilly Residents' Association), Mrs. T. Undery (Caerphilly Town Retailers' Association), Mrs. D. Hale (Caerphilly Town Retailers' Association), Mr. R. Tidridge (Heol Trecastell Residents' Association), Mrs. D. Stephens (Caerphilly Pubwatch), Ms. K Warrington (Caerphilly Workmen's Hall)

Also:

A. Highway (Town Centre Manager), S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager), A. Dallimore (Team Leader – Urban Renewal & Conservation), A. Brown (Environmental Health Officer)

1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor C. Elsbury, Town Councillor Prof. R. Deacon & A. Jones (Committee Clerk)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr. Highway declared an interest in item 7 as he serves as a non-stipendiary Curate at St. Martin's Church, which is one of the Churches that participate in the Flower Festival.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 20TH OCTOBER 2015

The previous minutes were taken as read, subject to the following amendment:

- Sgt. S. Greening was present at the meeting.

4. WELSH GOVERNMENT BUSINESS RATES LETTER

Cllr. James informed the group that he had invited the Minister for Economy, Science & Transport – Edwina Hart – to Caerphilly town centre to discuss business rates with business owners. A copy of the response letter was circulated prior to the meeting.

Following a discussion around the amount of time that has passed since the initial letter and the difficulty that business rates pose to businesses within Caerphilly town centre, it was agreed that Cllr. James would send a firmer letter of response after the Assembly elections, inviting the new Minister to visit Caerphilly.

5. AIR QUALITY UPDATE

Ms. Brown informed the group that there had been a few delays with the air quality modelling in terms of traffic monitoring. This has now been completed and the report is being finalised. Once the report has been completed, it will be circulated to members of this group for consultation.

In addition to the production of the report, a steering group is being established. Work is also being carried out with schools to educate children and encourage cycling.

There are some financial constraints in addressing the issues. As such, officers are working with developers of large-scale developments to secure S.106 money to implement the action plan.

Ms. Brown was thanked for her update.

6. BUSINESS REPORT CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE

Mr. Highway presented the report to the group, which outlined the number of businesses that opened and closed throughout the year, footfall data and the Town Centre Management initiatives that operated during 2015.

Ms. Warrington asked why the footfall camera is located in its current position. Mr. Highway explained that the camera had to be situated within a business, so it was a case of finding a business owner who was willing to host the system. Cllr. Fussell elaborated that the business used to be owned by a member of the Town Centre Management Group, so was more than happy to host the camera.

Mrs. Undrey enquired whether an additional camera could be installed in the town, perhaps towards the top of Cardiff Road. Mr. Highway stated that the system is very expensive, so it is all down to funding. However, it is important to have one camera in each town as it forms part of the data that gets sent back to Welsh Government.

Mr. Highway was thanked for the report.

7. REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR CAERPHILLY FLOWER FESTIVAL FROM CAERPHILLY TOWN COUNCIL

Mr. Williams noted that planning is well underway for this year's Flower Festival. There are nine Churches and four other organisations taking part this year. Each will receive £450 to contribute to their floral displays. A 49-seater bus is being put on to transport visitors between the venues this year. This is cheaper than the usual open-top bus.

The Town Council would like to make a request for £1,500 from the Area Forum Budget towards the cost of this year's festival, which is likely to be the last one.

A discussion took place around the benefit that the Flower Festival brings to businesses in the town centre, as the Caerphilly Town Retailers' Association did not feel that their members benefit from the event. Cllr. Fussell noted that it is not only a Church event as other

organisations and venues are also involved, along with local schools. It has gained momentum each year and now brings people in from across South East Wales.

A motion was put forward to allocate the £1,500 to the Flower Festival. There were ten votes in favour, one against and one abstention, so the motion was carried.

8. REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR CENOTAPH MEMORIAL PLAQUE

Mr. Highway informed the group that in readiness for Armed Forces Day on Saturday 25th June, consideration was being given to updating the Cenotaph plaque with the names of people who died in battle since 1972 and who resided within the Caerphilly Basin area.

A Freedom of Information request was made to the MoD to obtain the names, but a response has not yet been received. As such, the local branch of the Royal British Legion is also trying to help.

It is difficult to estimate cost until the number of names is known, but it was proposed that £6,892 be allocated in anticipation. There were 12 votes in favour of this proposal.

9. GO2 MY TOWN WEBSITE REPORT

Mr. Highway presented the report to the group, which summarised the revised content being placed on the Go2MyTown website and how members of the group could access the site. However, it was noted that the content is being regularly updated at present, which may mean some sections are not live or out-of-date.

Information hosted on the site includes footfall data, the Retail Property Directory, Town Centre Gazettes and a new news section, which incorporates stories from each of the town centres.

A live demonstration of the site will be brought to a future meeting.

Mr. Highway was thanked for the report.

10. PWLL-Y-PANT ROUNDABOUT UPDATE

Mr. Highway read a statement from Traffic Management:

“CCBC submitted a funding bid to Welsh Government prior to Christmas regarding the Pwll-y-Pant Roundabout improvement scheme. We have not received a funding award letter to date from Welsh Government.

The Council does have a preferred bidder, however, before they can be appointed funding will need to be in place and an internal report to Cabinet will be submitted for consideration and approval.”

11. PARK LANE UPDATE

Mr. Dallimore provided an update and informed the group that DTZ had been commissioned to undertake some soft market testing to investigate the market to establish any interest in the Park Lane site. It was concluded from this exercise that one national volume hotel provider was interested in providing an 80-bedroomed facility in Caerphilly Town Centre and would be interested in the site if it could accommodate this demand. One retailer also showed an initial interest but this has since fallen away due to the constraints attached to the site.

Further research has been undertaken on the possibility of providing hotel accommodation on the site. The Urbanist consultants have been commissioned to establish if a large 80-bed facility would fit on the site and to also further investigate the independent medium-sized hotel market. The Urbanists are well placed to undertake this task as they have been heavily involved in the development of the convention centre in Newport and the accommodation spin offs that this will have on SE Wales. As such they have built up a very strong contact base in the hotel sector.

They have concluded that the site would not accommodate a large 80-bed facility but would be more suited to a smaller hotel offering in the region of 30-40 bedrooms with some parking on site. It is believed that the inclusion of the Specsavers building into the footprint would be beneficial. Indicative designs have been produced outlining how such a building would sit on the site and make best use of its unique setting next to the castle. Initial costings highlight the fact that any development of this nature will not “wash its face” financially and that gap funding would be required. Funding sources such as Welsh Government are currently being investigated.

Cllr. Bevan asked whether the owners of Specsavers are involved in the scheme at all. Mr. Dallimore stated that they aren't, but there have been some positive discussions with the owners.

Ms. Warrington queried whether a museum has been considered for the site. Mr. Dallimore replied that it was considered, but it was felt that it would not boost the tourism offer significantly or increase the dwell time within the town centre. The site has been allocated within the Local Development Plan as a more commercial site, which would boost the tourism offer.

12. BENCHES & FLAGSTONES UPDATE

Mr. Dallimore provided an update on a previous Area Forum Budget allocation, which was to repair the flagstones and benches above the toilet block at the top of Cardiff Road.

The flagstones were damaged, with the most likely cause being skateboarding. The area was made safe by removing the damaged stones and laying tarmac as a temporary surface. Replacement stones have been ordered and will be installed in due course.

A bench of identical specification to the one that was damaged has been fabricated and delivered. Installation is due shortly.

13. ARTWORK UPDATE

At the previous meeting, Mr. Dallimore had requested Area Forum Budget money to carry out artwork repairs in the town centre.

The bird artwork on Stockland Street was inspected, but not deemed to be unsafe. However, some repairs are required and a company has been appointed. They need a three-day window where the weather will be dry and temperatures above 8°C in order for the repair resin to set.

In Windsor Street, there is a goose on a pole that appeared to be moving far more than usual in the high winds. The artwork has been inspected and is safe, but there is a little too much movement in the plinth that could lead to future problems. The same company carrying out the Stockland Street repairs will conduct the repairs to the plinth during finer weather.

14. 'CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET' CHRISTMAS VOUCHER BOOKLET 2015 – ANALYSIS REPORT

Mr. Highway presented the report to the group. Particular thanks were noted to the council's Graphics Design team for all of their work designing this year's voucher booklet, the Community Safety Wardens for helping to deliver the booklets and to Steve Wilcox for his work on the scheme.

Mr. Highway was thanked for the report.

15. CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE AUDIT – AUGUST 2015

Mr. Highway presented the audit to the group. The following issues were raised:

30 minute parking bays on Cardiff Road – the bays have been approved and the Traffic Order is currently being implemented.

Community Notice Board – an A1 sized board has been procured, which should be delivered shortly. A location on one of the Library walls has been agreed and the Area Forum Budget will be used to pay for installation costs.

Taxi Rank, Station Terrace – the scheme has been very well supported and it is anticipated that the Traffic Order will be made permanent at the end of the trial.

Homeless person, Cardiff Road – the person sadly passed away over the Christmas period.

No through road signage, Cardiff Road – this is currently being progressed. The signage should be installed shortly.

Cleaning of steps, The Twyn – the steps will be treated with an anti-fungal cleanser to reduce future problems.

Cigarette ends, Clive Street – Cllr. Jones asked if Police Officers could patrol the area to monitor offenders. Sgt. Greening confirmed that the area is already patrolled, but could be briefly prioritised.

The meeting closed at 15:24.

CHAIR