



BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 28TH FEBRUARY 2017

**SUBJECT: 'CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET' CHRISTMAS VOUCHER BOOKLET
2016– 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 2016.

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 during Christmas 2016. 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.
- 3.3 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out seven Well-being Goals which aim to make a positive impact upon the social, economic, environmental or cultural well being of the area or community concerned. This report aligns with the following Well-being Goals:
- A prosperous Wales;
 - A healthier Wales;
 - A Wales of cohesive communities;
 - A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language;
 - A globally responsible Wales.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 In the lead up to Christmas 2016, the Council's Town Centre Management team once again produced a 'Choose the High Street' Christmas Voucher Booklet. The scheme provides local retailers with the opportunity to take part in a co-ordinated marketing campaign. This year's Christmas Voucher Booklet contained 112 offers across the five managed town centres which was an increase of 7 on the previous year. The aims of the scheme are to provide businesses with an opportunity to capture consumer spend during the Christmas period and also to market the diverse retail offer contained in the town centres.

4.2 The booklet was designed by the Council's Graphic Design team. In addition, to the offers also included was a brief description of each town centre, a map of the County Borough showing the location of the five managed towns and adverts promoting the work in the community of different Council departments. These adverts raised awareness of the role of the Community Safety Wardens and the support offered to residents who are over 50 as part of Welsh Government's 'Aging Well in Wales' initiative. They also included details of the Visitor Attractions, the Go2 My Town website and the Christmas Events programme.

4.3 The scheme was officially launched on 31st October at Risca Library where local school children from Risca and Ty Syn Primary Schools joined the Cabinet Member Cllr. James and Father Christmas.

4.4 Marketing Platforms

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

- Bus adverts;
- Advertorial pages in the *Caerphilly Observer*;
- Social media engagement on the Council and Go2 My Town Facebook / Twitter feeds;
- Articles in the Council's *Newsline* 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;
- PDF version of the booklet and promotional page on the Go2 My Town website.

4.5 Production and Distribution

4.5.1 A total of 30,000 Voucher Booklets were produced, with distribution being carried out by the Council's Community Safety Wardens.

The following locations gave out 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, Chinkles;
- Bargoed: Library / Customer First Centre, Poundworld;
- Risca: Library / Customer First Centre & Tesco;
- Ystrad Mynach: Library & Tesco.

4.6 Supermarket Distribution

4.6.1 Once again the Town Centre Management team reached agreements with local supermarkets, ASDA (Blackwood) and Morrisons (Caerphilly & Bargoed) to distribute the booklets to their customers. For the first time Tesco (Risca & Ystrad Mynach) also participated in the scheme. Different receptacles were used this year which were sturdier and may be reusable next year.

4.7 Retailer Participation

4.7.1 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 2016	Number of Offers in 2015	Number of Offers in 2014	Number of Offers in 2013	Number of Offers in 2012
Caerphilly	40	31	29	26	24
Blackwood	30	32	26	24	20
Bargoed	26	20	23	21	14
Risca	6	8	6	4	5
Ystrad Mynach	8	10	2	4	N/A
Offers in other towns	2	4	4	1	1
Total	112	105	90	80	64

4.8 Retail Engagement

4.8.1 The Town Centre Management team made visits to numerous retailers across the five town centres explaining the scheme and encouraging participation. Awareness of the scheme was much higher amongst retailers this year.

4.9 Retailer Survey

4.9.1 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 23 returned, giving a response rate of 27%.

4.9.2 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?	61%	39%
2. Did the voucher booklet bring new customers?	52%	48%
3. Do you think schemes such as this highlight the importance of shopping locally?	78%	22%
4. Did you feel that the scheme was well-publicised?	41%	59%
5. Did you notice the bus advertising used to promote the scheme this year?	10%	90%
6. Would you consider taking part in a discount scheme in the future?	76%	24%
7. If yes, would you revise your offer in any way?	21%	79%

4.9.3 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 20. It was apparent that the quality of the offers received was better than in previous years, which was reflected in the fact that only 30% of respondents reported having no vouchers redeemed compared to 36% last year. The average number of vouchers redeemed was around 5.

- 4.9.4 Generally, the responses were positive. However, the biggest change was to the responses in question 1. In 2015 48% of respondents felt that the scheme benefitted their business, this year that figure rose to 61%.
- 4.9.5 It is positive to note that despite the varying success of the offers amongst participating businesses, 76% 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.
- 4.9.6 For the first time this year, (external) bus advertising was used to promote the scheme. Unfortunately, this new advertising medium was noticed by only 10% of the respondents, despite it being a high profile element of the publicity campaign.

4.10 Conclusion

- 4.10.1 In evaluating the scheme the wider changes in how the retail sector is approaching Christmas need to be understood. Multiple retailers are placing a greater emphasis on online sales and using discount vouchers sent to smart phones to encourage consumers to shop online. They are also staging flash discount days in stores in the lead up to Christmas. These changes make consumers increasingly price sensitive and place a much greater pressure on independent retailers to offer larger discounts. Although the scheme is operated and funded by the council, the level of discount offered by retailers remains solely at their discretion.
- 4.10.2 This year's booklet contained the highest number of offers since the scheme's inception which demonstrates that there is a growing appetite amongst local retailers to participate in the Christmas scheme. The distribution of 30,000 voucher booklets using an expanded supermarket partnership enabled the towns to be marketed and promoted to a wide audience across the County Borough.
- 4.10.3 The inclusion of adverts to support Council services continued to support the wider Improvement Objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 4.10.4 The Christmas Voucher Booklet scheme achieved its two primary objectives. Firstly, it offered independent retailers a chance to participate in a marketing campaign over Christmas. Secondly, it highlighted the retail offer across the five managed towns. Whilst the level of discount offered by retailers continues to be at the discretion of individual retailers, those elements of the scheme within the Council's control, the format of the booklet, publicity and distribution were all successfully delivered. The scheme remains a crucial tool in helping promote the County Borough's towns over Christmas and offering local retailers support in an increasingly challenging market place.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 This report contributes to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above in the following ways:
- *A prosperous Wales* - the retail sector is a significant employer within the County Borough and a substantial number of those retail businesses and jobs are located in the town centres;
 - *A healthier Wales* – visiting a town centre promotes physical exercise and encourages social interaction;
 - *A Wales of cohesive communities* – relevant, accessible and well managed town centres are vital to sustaining vibrant communities;
 - *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language* – town centres contain significant elements of the nation's architectural and cultural heritage. They are also places where the Welsh language can be taught, used and promoted;

- *A globally responsible Wales* – providing communities with local shops and services potentially reduces the necessity and frequency of vehicle use and promotes public transportation links.

5.2 In addition, the report is also consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act:

- Long Term - Investment in town centres contributes to the sustainability and viability of local communities. It is accepted that the role and nature of town centres may change in the coming decades, but the challenge is for them to remain places which are relevant to how people live their everyday lives;
- Prevention – The management and promotion of town centres through the 'Unique Places' model of Town Centre Management aims to prevent the decline of town centres and retain them as focal points of community life;
- Integration – The continued vitality of town centres is integral to the Act by contributing to the prosperity, health and cultural identity of Wales;
- Collaboration – Town Centre Management draws on different service areas within the Council to work towards achieving the well-being goals in respect of town centres. It also works in partnership with outside organisations such as Town & Community Councils, local charities and retailers to encourage and promote community engagement;
- Involvement – The County Borough's town centres serve a wide range of people across many different communities. They strive to be places of social interaction which celebrate diversity and promote equality.

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 campaign was funded through the Town Centre Management core budget.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct personnel implications.

9. CONSULTATIONS

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

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 This report is for information only.

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