



YSTRAD MYNACH TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON MONDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 2:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillors:

D. Cushing, T. Parry and S. Morgan

Together with:

Town & Community Councillor J.A. Pritchard, C. Mortimer (Clerk) and Police Constable S. Turley (Gwent Police)

Also:

A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), A. Dallimore (Team Leader – Urban Renewal), P. Hudson (Marketing and Events Manager), S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager), E. Sullivan (Interim Scrutiny Officer) and J. Tyler (Administrative Assistant)

1. TO APPOINT A CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Due to the limited attendance it was moved and seconded that Councillor Teresa Parry preside as Chair for this meeting and the appointment of a Chair and Vice Chair for the ensuing year be deferred to the next meeting of the Ystrad Mynach Town Centre Management Group and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Forehead and T. D. Davies and from Inspector A. O'Keefe (Gwent Police), Mr K. Jones (Ystrad Mynach Partnership) and Town & Community Councillor R. Osbourne.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

4. MINUTES – 21ST MARCH 2017

It was noted that apart from Community Councillor J.A. Pritchard, the Members present had not been in attendance at the meeting of the 21st March 2017 and as such felt that they could not move them as a correct record. It was agreed that they be presented at the next committee meeting for approval.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

5. UPDATE ON MATTERS RELATING TO YSTRAD MYNACH TOWN

Andrew Highway (Town Centre Development Manager) introduced with report which provided an update on matters relating to Ystrad Mynach Town and referred to the new unique Places document. The Officer highlighted the new features and amended text and circulated a copy of the latest version for Members information.

It was noted that the brochure would be used as a tool to engage with retailers in respect of town centre vacancies and forms the basis of the welcome pack supplied to new town centre businesses.

Members queried the current number of vacant business premises in the town centre and requested further information on the position of the Nat West Bank building. It was report that there were currently no business vacancies and the Nat West building would be addressed later in the report.

Mr Highway then updated the group on the Choose the High Street Christmas voucher booklet initiative, which has proven to be very popular with the public and retailers. It was noted that although in previous year Ystrad Mynach retailers had been difficult to engage with, this year four retailers had already applied for inclusion.

Members referred to the 'Black Friday' shopping event and its impact on the high street. The Officer confirmed that the general feeling within the retail sector was a move away from this kind of event, primarily as a result of the negative imagery often associated with it, although it was still being retained by on-line organisations such as Amazon.

In relation to the Nat West Bank closure, the Officer referred to the next update which confirmed that a letter had been received from RBS in response to the Council's request for them to reconsider their decision. RBS have cited the reduced number of counter transactions at the branch with customers choosing to bank differently as the reason for the closure. As to the future use of the building unfortunately the Council has no control on what happens to the site.

Steve Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre Manager) confirmed that the mobile Community Banker would continue to be available at Lidil's car park and would also be available at Ystrad Mynach Library one morning per week. Although it would not be able to undertake cash transactions it would provide advice on products and services to support customers.

Members expressed concern that the properties vacated by banks were routinely left empty for long periods of time, often falling into dereliction to the detriment of the town centre. Officers acknowledged this as an historic issue and one that had been raised with Welsh Government (WAG). WAG has been asked to highlight these issues to Banks and use their influence to try and accelerate the process.

Members queried how well the pop-up banks were being advertised within the local community. Officers advised that a leaflet had been produced to highlight the facility.

Alan Dallimore (Team Leader – Urban Renewal), introduced the update on the new wayfinding sign to be installed on Cardiff Road, near to the Centre of Sporting Excellence. The sign will provide information on key town centre facilities and locations for visitors and residents and should be installed by late November, early December at the latest.

Members welcomed its introduction as an excellent way of highlighting the facilities on offer.

Paul Hudson (Marketing and Events Manager) updated Members on the forthcoming Christmas market and the position of stall applications. The Officer advised that demand continued to be high for Ystrad Mynach and this was to be expected given the level of footfall generated. He referenced a small number of comments arising from the feedback forms distributed to retailers which suggested that the event should be extended or moved to Penallta Road. However it was felt that the event should be retained in the core of the town which was well established and worked successfully for the majority of people.

The entertainment programme for the event was noted and the work of the Community Council was acknowledged. Members referenced a conflict with regard to the number of raffle sales taking place during the event and it was accepted that with the various charitable organisations present and the Council's own on-line event there would be some duplication, however if there were any concerns they should be raised with Paul Hudson.

Members also referenced a conflict with a pet stall and the high street pet shop and requested that if possible when allocating applications care be taken in relation to the siting of the stalls. The Officer agreed to check event policy in this regard so that an appropriate balance could be struck between safeguarding the high street whilst ensuring healthy competition for the consumer.

Andrew Highway referred Members to update 6 on the report and the 'Choose the High Street Property Index'. Following the closure of the Go2 My Town website earlier this year a new version of the Retail Property Index has been developed and was now available to view via the Council's website.

A Member queried the position of the vacant units within the Bargoed Retail Plateau development. Mr Dallimore confirmed that the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) had agreed to lease Unit 3 and Unit 4 and that retail letting agents had confirmed that once the DWP lease was signed, the remaining empty unit would be in a better position to be let.

Members received an update on the new 'footfall counter' equipment and provider and Mr Wilcox confirmed that feedback on the figures generated would be available once the new system is verified and calibrated.

In terms of the update on Parking Enforcement, Members were advised that this was currently being considered by the Council and that Officers would be working alongside colleagues in neighbouring authorities and Gwent Police to explore the various options available. The matter had been placed on the forward work programme for the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee and would be subject to full consultation processes before its consideration by Cabinet and approval by Council.

Members discussed current enforcement issues, the pressures on Gwent Police resources and its impact on illegal parking. PC Turley confirmed that 10 tickets had been issued over the past month and parking enforcement would continue to be part of the duties of Community Safety Officers. Members expressed concern with regard to enforcement during the change over period and where responsibilities would lie. Assurances were given that Gwent Police would still have obligations under the Road Traffic Act and it was the civil parking element that would fall to local authorities going forward. It was noted that there was a statutory process to be followed which must be approved by Welsh Government.

A reference was made to specific parking issues in the area around the school and Barclays Bank where traffic was often at a stand still and Mr Highway queried if any police resources could be deployed to look at this specific issue. PC Turley confirmed that he could not guarantee the commitment of resources as deployment priorities could change very quickly however if specific information on persistent offenders, such as licence plate numbers could be gathered then a more targeted approach could be taken.

The Chair thanked the Officers for the update and for answering Members questions.

Having fully considered its content the Ystrad Mynach Town Centre Management Group noted the update report.

6. YSTRAD MYNACH TOWN CENTRE AUDIT

Andrew Highway presented the Ystrad Mynach Town Centre Audit for information.

The Officer referred to page 12 and the uneven surface at Siloh Square and confirmed that area had been assessed and would require re-pointing this was currently out for costing and a further update on the progress made would be included in the next audit.

In relation to Page 10 and an issue where the bags left for collection by the litter picker were being dumped into a residents garden. Mr Highway confirmed that this collection point could be moved and asked the Member to email details so the matter could be looked into further.

Having fully considered its content the Ystrad Mynach Town Centre Management Group noted the audit.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the next meeting they were signed by the Chair.

The meeting closed at 14:51pm

CHAIR