



## CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2018

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON MATTERS RELATING TO CAERPHILLY TOWN**

**REPORT BY: TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**

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### 1. BUSINESS REPORT

#### **Caerphilly Retail Overview 2017**

The retail offer at Castle Court Shopping Centre and its *Morrisons* store remains one of the primary reasons for people to visit Caerphilly town centre. The retail offer, which includes: *WH Smith, Argos, Boots, Game, Poundland* and *Costa Coffee*, was strengthened this year as the Centre attracted clothing retailer *Edinburgh Woollen Mill* into it's largest unit. A new Centre Manager instigated a 'pop up' shop for the *Royal British Legion* during November and also sought to link in with the Town Council's Christmas lights switch on. Both of these initiatives strengthened the Centres connection with the wider town centre community.

Although the lack of a convenience store in Cardiff Road has constrained a growth in footfall, a number of key properties have been refurbished which has in turn has attracted some new independent retailers: *The Bake Station, My Cod Fish Bar, K&S Clothing* and *Studio 9 Advance Treatment*. The town's restaurant offer received a significant boost with the opening of two aspirational restaurants: *Volare* and *La Casa Mia* and also the refurbishment of *The Court House* public house which overlooks the castle.

In Pentrebane Street the poor condition of the gateway property located at the junction with Cardiff Road appears to be having a detrimental affect. This year a number of key businesses have closed and the Indoor Market now requires investment to support the diverse range of tenants who operate in it. Clive Street continues to attract a strong line up of independent retailers which this year was added to with the opening of apparel retailer *Mojo King*.

#### **Overview 2017**

In the next year it is expected that the current vogue for more experiential shopping will continue to grow. In the County Borough's town centres there remains a strong emphasis on core retail and service provision which may lessen the impact of any consumer migration towards the leisure sector. Looking ahead, there are some wider issues, such as the rise in interest rates and the implications of Brexit, which are expected to have an impact on consumer's ability to maintain their present levels of spending in 2018. Any reduction in consumer confidence will impact directly on the

retail sector both independents and multiples. The concern is that these economic factors will begin influence the long-term commitment of some multiple retailers and banks as they reassess their need to retain a presence in smaller town centres. The other challenge which makes town centres vulnerable in 2018 is the continued growth in online shopping and its focus on low price points.

<b>Caerphilly Business Comparison</b>			
	2017	2016	LFL Comparison
Businesses Opened	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3 more businesses opened</b>
Businesses Closed	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6 more businesses closed</b>

<b>Caerphilly Footfall Comparison</b>			
	2017	2016	Difference
Highest Number	<b>33,292 (18/12/17)</b>	<b>36,111 (25/07/16)</b>	<b>-2,819</b>
Lowest Number	<b>17,149 (25/12/17)</b>	<b>23,152 (28/12/15)</b>	<b>-6,003</b>
Average Footfall	<b>26,422</b>	<b>28,352</b>	<b>-1,930</b>
Note:	<b>Footfall data was unavailable for 11 weeks during 2017 due to the changeover in provider and equipment.</b>		

## 2. CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET CHRISTMAS VOUCHER BOOKLET

The 2017 “Choose the High Street Christmas Voucher Booklet” saw a total of 105 offers being presented from retailers across the five managed town centres and beyond. An initial print run of 25,000 was distributed across the County Borough with the generous aid of the Council’s Community Safety Wardens. Following the positive reception of the booklet and a larger number of Caerphilly retailers wishing to distribute the booklets during the Pwll-y-Pant roundabout works, an additional 5,000 booklets were printed.

A feedback survey was sent to all participating businesses in January 2018. 96% of respondents feel that schemes such as this highlight the importance of shopping locally and 83% would consider taking part in this (or a similar discount scheme) in the future. One new business added “As a struggling new business, we found the booklet brought customers to us didn’t know we were here”.

During previous years, a variety of publicity methods have been utilised to promote the scheme. These have included bus advertising, billboard posters, adverts in local press and posters for participating retailers. In light of budgetary pressures across the Authority and the departments MTFP savings, publicity of the scheme was done primarily by social media, some online advertising and the Council’s Newline publication during 2017. As a result, 52% of businesses didn’t feel the scheme was well-publicised, with six businesses specifically commenting that they didn’t see any publicity this year and feel the scheme needs better promotion.

Should the scheme be run again in 2018, a balance between budgetary constraints and the need for publicity and promotion of the scheme will need to be carefully balanced in order to address the concerns of last year’s participants. In general, the

scheme is growing year-on-year and continues to be positively received by businesses and residents of the County Borough alike.

### **3. PWLL Y PANT ROUNDABOUT**

Works are currently progressing to the revised programme, the two week closure on Pontygwindy Road, weather permitting should have been lifted by the 5<sup>th</sup> March and the planned works completed.

The contractor is progressing well in his preparation for the reinstatement of two lane on the roundabout and key approaches, works are due for completion in this respect towards the latter part of March, again weather permitting.

Current completion date for the whole of the works has been pushed back slightly and is now anticipated to be the end of October/early November 2018.

### **4. CAERPHILLY MASTER PLAN**

A draft Caerphilly Basin Masterplan has been prepared, setting out the future development and regeneration opportunities for Caerphilly town centre within the context of the wider Caerphilly Basin. This will be the first of a series of masterplans for the county borough prepared to support the objectives of the wider regeneration strategy - 'A Foundation for Success.'

Subject to Cabinet approval, the draft Masterplan is scheduled for a public consultation between 26<sup>th</sup> March - 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2018. The Council is keen to gauge the views of the public and key stakeholders on the draft proposals.

### **5. NIGHT TIME ECONOMY**

In order to attract more visitors, create a better evening offer throughout the town and explore opportunities for further investment in the evening economy, the Council has commissioned consultants to produce an Evening and Night Time Economy Study for the town.

The consultants have a wealth of knowledge in this field and are currently undertaking a number of pieces of work in Cardiff City Centre. They have developed an extensive contact list of evening/night-time economy developers and investors who will give an honest appraisal of Caerphilly as it is now and identify opportunities for growth in this sector within the town centre.

### **6. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

A Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) 'Stage 1' report was presented to Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> December. Members provided recommendations to be reported to Cabinet that they were in favour of adopting CPE and that the authority should retain in-house enforcement and collaborate with one or

more other local authorities (LA's) to provide the back office support. The report and recommendations are being presented to Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> February.

A meeting took place with Gwent Police prior to Christmas to discuss the current situation with regard to parking enforcement. Gwent Police confirmed that they would continue to provide the service until December 2018 and that they hoped LA's would be in a position to transfer powers at that point in time. They also stated that they would work with any LA's who could not meet this date.

If Cabinet grant approval to proceed with transfer of powers, officers will undertake the relevant procurement exercises needed to try and meet the January 2019 deadline. There are many aspects that need to be taken forward but the two main requirements will be a full review of the existing Traffic Regulation Orders along with putting together an application to Welsh Government to request a transfer of the relevant powers to the authority.

## **7. AREA FORUM BUDGET**

The Council's Community Regeneration Team, who administer the Area Forum budget report that there remains unallocated monies in the Caerphilly area forum budget due to underspends on completed projects. Members are invited to put forward suggestions for appropriate use of these monies

## **8. AIR QUALITY**

Since the last meeting, there is no further update on the review of the Caerphilly Town Centre Air Quality Action Plan or the air quality assessment in relation to emissions from buses.

The air quality in schools project has recently commenced and the Pollution team have engaged with the chosen Caerphilly schools, namely, the Twyn, Hendre Infants and Hendre Juniors and they are all busy undertaking their own monitoring studies around the school yard. Over the next few months, it is intended to go in to the schools and deliver a talk on air quality (using some of the monitoring data the children are currently gathering) to raise awareness and discuss ways in which people can help prevent poor air quality.

The Pollution team continue to work with the Council's air quality consultants on some of the large proposed developments within the Caerphilly Basin, namely Virginia Park and Gwern-y-Domen to ensure that any impact on air quality is properly quantified so informed decisions can be made.

## **9. CADW OPERATIONAL WORKS**

In early January officers from the Council attended a high level meeting to discuss Caerphilly Castle

In attendance were

- Jason Thomas, Director for Culture, Sport and Tourism
- Rob Holt, Deputy Director, Tourism Development and Major Events, Visit Wales
- Gerwyn Evans, Head of Tourism Development, Visit Wales
- Neal O’Leary, Head of Conservation and Operational Services, Cadw
- CCBC Officers & Councillor S Morgan Cabinet member
- Cadw middle managers

The meeting was focused on establishing Caerphilly Castle as a tier one attraction within Wales. Examples including Warwick Castle were tabled as to models that Cadw could follow to improve the visitor experience and increase visitor numbers. Jason Thomas the Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism also believes there is a wider role for the town in achieving this goal and has tasked officers from the Council, Cadw and Visit Wales to investigate a number of projects:

- Coach pull in and Stop over facility
- Improvements to facades of properties surrounding the castle
- Ensuring the development of Park Lane adds value to the castle experience
- Looking to maximise the use of the whole of the castle grounds including the current Cadw depot just off Crescent Road
- Making the castle visitor experience more exciting - Cadw have engaged ARAD consultants to investigate options for developing the castle into a tier one attraction.

## **10. PARK LANE SITE**

For some time officers have been working towards attracting a tourism related development to the site at Park lane. Initially it was reported that the site was too small for the large hotel chains and that more bespoke independent boutique hoteliers did not consider Caerphilly a particularly good investment opportunity.

However, after an advertisement in the Estates Journal in the Autumn of 2017, the Council received two serious offers from developers for purchasing the Park Lane site. Both have presented outline proposals that would add value to the visitor experience.

A cabinet report is being drafted to determine how best to proceed with a view to a sale of the land to a policy compliant developer.

## **11. CAPITAL REGION UPDATE**

### **Regeneration Update - Cardiff Capital Region**

There are a number of separate regeneration initiatives that the Council is playing an active role in progressing. The highest profile of which is the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal which involves £1.2 billion worth of investment. The City Deal aims to deliver up to 25,000 new jobs and secure £4 billion of private sector investment. Whilst not every town or village may benefit directly, the region itself will benefit from more jobs, better transport, increased skill levels and more assistance towards businesses growth.

Central to the Cardiff Capital Region is the METRO scheme led by City Region Transport Authority. METRO will bring a more efficient rail service to the South Wales

valleys with trains running at fifteen minute intervals and linking with an improved bus service as ticketing and timetables are integrated.

The 'Our Valleys Our Future' project, led by a Welsh Government Ministerial Taskforce, aims to empower people in communities throughout the South Wales Valleys.

Finally, a Foundation for Success, currently in draft form, is the Council's new regeneration strategy (2018-2023) setting out how the County Borough can economically transform over the next five years.

### **Regeneration Update - Caerphilly Town centre**

A number of initiatives are also being developed in Caerphilly town centre to support and complement the work of Cardiff Capital Region. Integral to this is a new Caerphilly Basin Masterplan identifying opportunities for economic growth around an improved METRO hub, the development of the night time economy and the social and physical regeneration of Lansbury Park.

CADW are currently undertaking their own study as to how the monument can attract more visitors and are working with the Council to identify ways to develop the tourism offer. The aspiration for a hotel at Park Lane will look to build on this work and offer visitors a better and more inclusive experience when visiting Caerphilly town centre.

The ongoing works at the Pwll-y-Pant roundabout, although disruptive in the short term, in the long term will increase traffic capacity and are part of a wider investment into the County Borough's highway network.

Finally, the Council has a remit to introduce Civil Parking Enforcement into its town centres which will support economic growth by tackling the persistent issue of illegal and inconsiderate parking.

## **11. SUMMER EVENTS**

Stall applications have been sent out for the Caerphilly Food Festival and the Big Cheese and staff are currently processing application forms prior to allocating pitches for the two events. A dedicated facebook page is being set up for The Big Cheese and event officers are working their way through the many procurement orders required for the two events.

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