



## BARGOED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 14TH MARCH 2018

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

**REPORT BY: TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**

### 1. BUSINESS REPORT

- 1.1 Over the course of the year there has been a shift in footfall patterns towards the south of the town centre. As a consequence, the northern end of Bargoed centre endured a difficult year with the loss of two key national retailers: *Spar* and *Shoe Zone*. However, the relocation of *Appliance UK* into a much larger unit was a positive step, as was the opening of *Bargoed Local* which ensures that High Street retains a convenience store offer. The year also witnessed the departure of two long standing independent businesses: *Darlington Opticians* and *Aaran Carpets* which closed their doors after many years in the town centre. Despite a challenging trading environment, Bargoed still successfully attracted a number of new businesses including: *Vape & Ease*, *Hair@13*, *Modern Man* and *The Stove Centre*.
- 1.2 *Poundworld* on Lowry Plaza enjoyed another strong years trading as the schemes anchor tenant and made the switch away from being a single price point store. The letting of Units 3&4 to Department of Work and Pensions provider is seen by the Council's property agents as the key to successfully letting the final unit in the scheme. With the opening of *Bargoed Fish Bar* early in 2017 there now exists a very real possibility that Lowry Plaza could have been fully let in the foreseeable future.

#### **Overview 2017**

- 1.3 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 to 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>Bargoed Business Comparison</b>			
	2017	2016	LFL Comparison
Businesses Opened	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3 fewer businesses opened</b>
Businesses Closed	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2 more businesses closed</b>

<b>Bargoed Footfall Comparison</b>			
	2017	2016	Difference
Highest Number	<b>13,757 (18/12/17)</b>	<b>15,939 (19/12/16)</b>	<b>-2,182</b>
Lowest Number	<b>6,366 (25/12/17)</b>	<b>6,953 (28/12/15)</b>	<b>-587</b>
Average Footfall	<b>10,564</b>	<b>10,560</b>	<b>+4</b>
Note:	<p><b>Footfall data was unavailable for 11 weeks during 2017 due to the changeover in provider and equipment.</b></p> <p><b>The Bargoed North camera was removed when the equipment was changed over, so only the Bargoed South are included above.</b></p>		

## **2. CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET CHRISTMAS VOUCHER BOOKLET**

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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”.
- 2.3 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 Newsline 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.
- 2.4 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. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.

- 3.3 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 the Welsh Government to request a transfer of the relevant powers to the authority.

#### **4. CAPITAL REGION UPDATE**

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 The 'Our Valleys Our Future' project, led by a Welsh Government Ministerial Taskforce, aims to empower people in communities throughout the South Wales Valleys.
- 4.4 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.

#### **5. CHANNEL BLOCKS**

- 5.1 Failure of the channel blocks is evident throughout the town centre. NCS are reacting to failures when they occur but this has led to a patchwork of tarmacadam infills. These failures have also affected the 'arco' grill drain covers
- 5.2 In trying to establish responsibility for this failure, the Council wish to examine the construction materials used to bed these blocks into situ. Contractors have recently been commissioned to take core samples of the bedding concrete/cement mix and to get it tested to establish if it is as per the specification drawings. This work was held off until after Christmas as there will be an element of disruption in the town centre. It is expected that this work can be carried out on a Sunday before the end of March.

#### **6. LETTING OF UNITS 3 & 4**

##### **Letting of Units 3 & 4 –**

- 6.1 Units 3 and 4 have been the focus of discussions with a Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) for some time now. Previous reports to the Town Centre Management Group have outlined how this tenant has appointed property agents to act on their behalf and that through negotiations with the Council, Heads of Terms have been agreed for a 10 year lease.
- 6.2 The DWP fit-out proposals have been approved by the senior landlord Rockspring and CCBC's solicitors (Morgan La Roche) have worked closely with those appointed by DWP and the lease has now been signed.

- 6.3 DWP's embargo on publicity has now been lifted and a general press release has been announced in the local press and a more focused press release has been developed for the property investment /retail sector.
- 6.4 Planning approval has also been granted for the frontages and signage of the two properties.
- 6.5 DWP have now appointed a new specialist team to implement the detailed fit-out plans for the units. This team is reviewing the detailed plans submitted and there may be some time lag before they appoint contractors to start work on the units.
- 6.6 The Council's retail agents are now active and have gone back out to the market with a concerted campaign to attract a tenant to Unit 6A. There is real optimism that the letting of Units 3 and 4 will give some real momentum behind this campaign.
- 6.7 Agents have reported at the start of February that there has already been some interest expressed for the empty unit.
- 6.8 Other news pertinent to the retail units is that Rockspring have sold their interest in the wider development to Bargoed Estates Ltd. This basically means that the Council now have a new head landlord.

## **7. PLATEAU DEVELOPMENT SITE**

- 7.1 Members of the TCMG will be aware that CCBC have been unable to secure ODEON as tenant on the largest of the undeveloped sites on the plateau. Although works have been undertaken to improve the visual amenity of this site, it is still the Council's intentions to develop the site out for a use which benefits the community of Bargoed.
- 7.2 As reported previously to this group, officers from the Council have entered into a dialogue with a pub/restaurant chain that are looking at opportunities to expand their business interest at suitable locations. The company's Managing Director has given approval for them to pursue the site purchase
- 7.3 Heads of Terms have been presented to the Council - These have formed the basis of a Cabinet Report seeking approval to negotiate solely with this company over the sale of the site to them.
- 7.4 This Cabinet report was approved on 31<sup>st</sup> January and officers are now in a dialogue with the company over the sales terms. In addition officers are working with the company to allow them to better understand the constraints of the site.

## **8. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR MORRISONS CAR PARK – VERBAL UPDATE**

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