



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15TH MAY 2018

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT MODEL

REPORT BY: INTERIM CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the views of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the proposed revision of the Council's Town Centre Management model prior to its presentation to Cabinet for consideration for approval.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides information on how the Council's existing 'Unique Places' model of Town Centre Management could be adapted in order to accommodate Newbridge town centre as a sixth managed town. The report proposes a two tier approach to town centre management that utilises existing resources to preserve the integrity of the Town Centre Management model in 'Tier One' towns, whilst still offering a proportion of the model's components in 'Tier Two' towns that would be extended to include Newbridge.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The proposals within the Council's draft Regeneration Strategy "A Foundation for Success" are based on a number of regeneration principles, some of which acknowledge that town centres are powerful economic hubs and have the capability to drive economic growth and provide a focus for local economic activity. The vitality and viability of town centres should be enhanced by working in partnership with the business community in order to attract new investment and sustain confidence
- 3.2 In particular, the following objectives within the draft Regeneration Strategy all have a town centric focus:
- SB1 – Building a more resilient and diversified economy
 - SB 2 – Supporting economic growth and innovation
 - SB3 – Creating an environment that nurtures business
 - SQL7 – Refocus on town centres to serve the needs of residents and business
- 3.3 "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.
- 3.4 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 resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Council's 'Unique Places' model of Town Centre Management was developed in 2004 and currently operates in Caerphilly, Blackwood, Bargoed, Risca and Ystrad Mynach town centres.
- 4.2 The County Borough's town centres are categorised by Regeneration and Planning Division using a hierarchy, which is based on the role and function of each individual centre. To this extent the hierarchy currently comprises five Principal Town Centres: Caerphilly, Blackwood, Bargoed, Ystrad Mynach and Risca. Due to their population catchments and size, Blackwood and Caerphilly are also viewed as having a sub-regional status. In addition, there are four Local Centres: Rhymney, Newbridge, Nelson and Bedwas. These Local Centres are generally smaller and not as strategically significant as the Principal Towns.
- 4.3 In 2004, the Town Centre Management function was applied to the three largest Principal Town Centres at Caerphilly, Blackwood and Bargoed. In 2005, a report was presented to Regeneration Scrutiny Committee (13/12/05) setting out Terms of Reference for the Town Centre Management Groups. Following the success of the model there were a number of requests from Members for the model to be expanded into other town centres within the County Borough.
- 4.4 In 2011, a decision was taken to extend the model to include Risca as a Principal Town Centre. Members recognised that additional resources would be required to do so and an Assistant Town Centre Manager was appointed. Following this decision, Members from other towns began to lobby for the model to be applied to their town centre. In 2012, a report was presented to Cabinet (11/09/12) reviewing the existing Terms of Reference for the Town Centre Management Groups and setting out new ones, these are included in Appendix 2. In 2013, Ystrad Mynach, the remaining Principal Town Centre, was chosen to have 'Unique Places' applied to it – in recognition of the need to maximise the public sector investment which had recently been made in the wider Ystrad Mynach area.
- 4.5 Members will be aware that there has never been specific criteria or formulae applied to decide which of the towns are managed, other than the aspiration to expand and apply the model from the original three towns to the current five Principal Town Centres.
- 4.6 **'Unique Places' Model**
The 'Unique Places' town centre management model works on two different levels. The first is operational and the second is promotional. A summary of what the model currently offers each of the five towns is set out below and is broken down into these two distinct areas:
- 4.6.1 **Operational**
- Environmental Audit – covering the town centre boundary as defined by the Local Development Plan
 - The Audit forms part of Town Centre Improvement Group Agenda
 - Town Centre Management Groups (four times a year)
 - Weekly town centre visits and retailer engagement

- Meetings between Council officers, the Police and other stakeholders to resolve Audit issues
- Provision of a footfall counter
- A database of all current town centre businesses
- Weekly footfall data circulated via *Gov Delivery* database
- Town centre updates circulated via *Gov Delivery* database

4.6.2 Promotional

- Lamppost banners
- Retail Property Index - a bilingual database of every shop for let or sale across the five managed towns
- Proactive promotion of vacant units by engaging with property agents
- Town Centre Gazette – a bespoke newsletter delivered to each business (five editions per year)
- Targeting of key multiple retailers to occupy vacant units
- Pop-Up Shops - promotion, support and availability of a 'Pop-Up Shop' Guide
- Provision of designated promotional space with power supply supported by a booking system for both commercial and charitable activities
- 'Choose the High Street' initiatives
- 'Choose the High Street' Christmas Voucher booklet containing offers from retailers across the five managed towns

Newbridge Town Centre

4.7 Under the Regeneration and Planning Division criteria, Newbridge is categorised as a Local Centre. Between 2009 and 2015 the town centre has benefitted from significant investment under the 'Newbridge Regeneration Programme'. The regeneration programme secured circa £15 million of investment from a number of different funding sources including: European Structural Funds, Welsh Government, Heritage Lottery and Caerphilly County Borough Council. The programme successfully delivered a number of key projects including:

- The Calzaghe Bridge,
- Comprehensive public realm improvements,
- The restoration of the 'Institute' & 'Memo',
- A building improvement grants scheme and creation of the Newbridge Riverside Park.

4.8 Under the terms of the funding the Council has an obligation until 2020 to continue the maintenance of these works to the standard which the funding was given. There is no specific maintenance budget within Regeneration and Planning Division for such maintenance works and the responsibility consequently falls within the Council's established maintenance regimes to undertake ongoing maintenance and to fund the associated costs.

Two Tier 'Unique Places' Model

4.9. In order to fulfil the Council's maintenance commitment in respect of Newbridge town centre and demonstrate how the funding has benefited the town, it is proposed to extend the 'Unique Places' model of Town Centre Management to include Newbridge. There is no defined town centre boundary for Newbridge within the Local Development Plan, therefore the defined geographical area which the Town Centre Management function would cover is shown on a map in Appendix 1.

4.10 In order to accommodate a sixth managed town centre within the available level of resources, it is proposed to adapt the existing 'Unique Places' model and adopt a two tier approach.

4.11 The proposed two tier approach recognises the sub regional importance of Caerphilly and Blackwood by designating them as Tier 1 towns. The Principal Town Centres of Bargoed,

Risca, Ystrad Mynach along with Newbridge would be classed as Tier 2 towns. The inclusion of Newbridge as a managed town centre is designed to ensure that the authority meets its obligations in respect of maintaining the regeneration works under the terms of the external funding.

4.12 In order to effectively manage staff and budget resources the proposed two tier model seeks to deliver the key elements of Town Centre Management in all six towns by reducing a number of the functions currently undertaken. The proposed new two tier model is set out below.

'Unique Places' – Proposed Two Tier Model	
Tier 1	Tier 2
Towns – Caerphilly / Blackwood	Towns – Bargoed / Risca / Ystrad Mynach / Newbridge
Town centre visits – weekly	Town centre visits – twice a month
Banner changes – twice a year	Banner changes – twice a year
Town Centre Gazette – Yes (5 editions per year)	Town Centre Gazette - No
Town Centre Management Groups – Twice a year – Spring /Autumn	Town Centre Management Groups – Twice a year – Spring /Autumn These would be scheduled for the same day and follow on from each other to minimise staff resource requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caerphilly Borough East towns - Risca & Newbridge • Caerphilly Borough West towns - Bargoed & Ystrad Mynach
Town Centre Improvement Group – Environmental Audit Every 8 weeks	Town Centre Improvement Group – Environmental Audit Every 16 weeks Caerphilly Borough East & Caerphilly Borough West towns would be considered at alternate TCIG meetings.
Footfall Cameras – Yes	Footfall Cameras – Yes
Retail Property Index – Yes	Retail Property Index - Yes
Promotional Sites – Caerphilly & Blackwood	Promotional Sites – Bargoed, Risca, Ystrad Mynach & Newbridge
Business data collected – Yes	Business data collected – Yes
Footfall data collected – Yes	Footfall data collected – Yes
CTHS Christmas Voucher Booklet – Yes	CTHS Christmas Voucher Booklet - Yes
'Choose the High Street' web site – Yes (once developed)	'Choose the High Street' web site – Yes (once developed)

Town Centre Visits

- 4.13 The current Town Centre Management staff consists of the Town Centre Development Manager and the Assistant Town Centre Manager. The visits that they undertake to the managed towns seek to address specific complaints made by the public/local Members and provide an opportunity to interact with the local businesses to offer business support and advice. In addition, on these visits data is collected for the new businesses performance indicator and the respective Retail Property Index is checked and updated.
- 4.14 Although it is recognised that managing six town centres significantly stretches the staff resource, under the new arrangement, Tier 1 towns would continue to be visited on a weekly basis, whereas the Tier 2 towns would reduce from weekly visits to every other week, subject to availability of staff resources. This would continue to enable data to be checked and collected, but would reduce the frequency of business engagement.

Banner Changes

- 4.15 The banners are recognised by officers as playing an important role in creating vibrant towns which serve their local communities and create job opportunities. Over a 12-year period the Council has made a substantial financial investment in the BannerFlex system which attaches the banner to the lamppost. The Council also holds a comprehensive stock of generic banners worth several thousand pounds which are used in all of managed towns.
- 4.16 The proposal would reduce the banner changes in all six towns to twice a year in order to deliver the agreed 2018/19 MTFP savings on banner changes. The 20 additional banners required for Newbridge town centre would be sourced by redeploying a small number of the BannerFlex systems from each of the other town centres and installing them onto lampposts in Newbridge town centre. This would deliver the same number of banners across six rather than five towns but would necessitate a one-off cost to be incurred in respect to the relocation of the BannerFlex system.

Town Centre Gazette

- 4.17 At present, the Town Centre Gazette is sent out as a hard copy to businesses in the five town centres. This format, rather than an electronic one, ensures that it is more likely to be read by the businesses. It is proposed to retain this approach for Tier 1 towns but to discontinue it in Tier 2 towns, partly to reduce costs and partly to prioritise staff resources.

Town Centre Management Budget

- 4.18 The core revenue budget for Town Centre Management funds the provision of footfall counters, banner changes and marketing through the 'Choose the High Street' campaign. Over the last few years this budget has been identified for MTFP savings and Council agreed in February 2018 to a further MTFP saving of £7,000 from an operational budget of £30,000 with an additional undetermined saving of mileage and printing costs also required to be met.

4.19 Town Centre Management Groups (TCMG)

The two tier model proposes to reduce the frequency of TCMG meetings in all the town centres to twice a year and combine meetings of the Tier 2 towns on the same day one after another. In practice, this would mean that the two Caerphilly Borough West Tier 2 towns of Bargoed and Ystrad Mynach would meet consecutively (one after another) on the same day and the Caerphilly Borough East towns of Risca and Newbridge would meet consecutively on another day. As Tier 1 towns, Caerphilly and Blackwood would retain their individual meetings.

Town Centre Improvement Group (TCIG)

- 4.20 The TCIG is a valuable part of the 'Unique Places' model as it ensures that items which have been placed on the Environmental Audit are continually considered by the service areas until an appropriate resolution is found. The TCIG membership consists of the Chair of each of the TCMG's plus police inspectors and senior Council officers with a streetscene management responsibility. The TCIG is a proven effective mechanism for managing the street scene and much of the environmental improvements across the five existing managed towns are due to the diligent work of this group. Under the new model only Tier 1 towns would have their audits considered at each TCIG meeting, whilst the audits for Caerphilly Borough East & West towns would be considered at alternate meetings (see table below).

i.e. January	i.e. March
Caerphilly	Caerphilly
Blackwood	Blackwood
Bargoed	Risca
Ystrad Mynach	Newbridge

- 4.21 Another change would be in the frequency of the TCIG meetings which would move from every 6 weeks to every 8 weeks. These changes are designed to alleviate some of the demands on the maintenance staff resources in managing a sixth town centre. However, it should be noted that individual departments have limited budget for routine works in town centres. In order to fund any "improvement" works which are often identified when a town first attains 'managed' status, the Town Centre Management process relies heavily on the Enhanced Maintenance budget and Community Assets Budget. The Council's commitment to its MTFP means that these two budgets continue to be reviewed on an annual basis and potential savings identified.
- 4.22 It is worth noting that the Enhanced Maintenance budget was £89,000 in 2013/2014 and has been reduced currently to £19,000. This £70,000 saving has supported the Council's MTFP. The Community Assets budget was £40,000 in 2013/2014 and has been reduced currently to £20,000. Therefore, since 2013, the amount of maintenance budget available to service areas has been reduced by £90,000 in order to support the MTFP. These budget pressures are expected to continue in the medium term.
- 4.23 If the report is approved by Cabinet and the proposed and a two tier model of Town Centre Management is adopted in order to accommodate Newbridge as a sixth managed town centre, a revision of the existing Town Centre Management Groups Terms of Reference will be necessary.

Conclusion

- 4.24 The proposal to adopt a two tier approach to Town Centre Management reflects the growing sub regional importance of Caerphilly and Blackwood. It is also informed by the Council's need to fulfil its funding obligation to maintain the scheme in Newbridge town centre in accordance with the conditions of the European funding. To deliver the 'Unique Places' model of Town Centre Management which will include Newbridge town centre it is necessary to take a two tier approach which will enable existing resources to be extended further, whilst still retaining the core function of Town Centre Management.
- 4.25 Any proposed change to the successful 'Unique Places' model will have an effect on the current management of the existing five towns, in particular Bargoed, Risca and Ystrad Mynach where current town centre management service provision will be reduced. There also needs to be a consideration as to how a two tier system will be perceived by businesses and local Members.

- 4.26 However, the benefits of managed town centres are clearly demonstrated across the County Borough and taking a two tier approach offers the possibility of meeting the need to manage an additional town and retaining many of the key features of the 'Unique Places' model across six rather than five town centres.

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 resilient Wales* – developing diversity of town centres helps to create a more resilient town centre.
 - *A more equal Wales* – town centres celebrate diversity and promote equal opportunity for all people regardless of their background or circumstances.
 - *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 and promote significant elements of the nation's architectural and cultural heritage.
 - *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.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An EIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. No potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact has been identified, therefore a full EIA has not been carried out.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Town Centre Management service is allocated an annual revenue budget which has been reduced each year to meet savings under the MTFP. Therefore, in order to accommodate an additional town centre under the existing budget it is deemed necessary to apply a two tier approach to delivering the 'Unique Places' model using the available resources.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Town Centre Management service consists of two staff who allocate their time across five town centres. If Newbridge town centre is added to the portfolio of towns to be managed then the same resource will need to be extended to accommodate the additional work load brought on by accommodating a sixth town centre.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 The report has been issued for consultation to the Members who attend the five existing Town Centre Management Groups plus the elected members of Newbridge. Consultation responses are outlined below:

- 9.2 Cllr Etheridge(Blackwood) has concerns over the envisaged additional workload of the Town Centre Manager.
- 9.3 Cllr Price (Bargoed) also expects there to be additional work for all staff concerned but believes that Newbridge should come into the equation as the town centre model of management is a good model and is one that works extremely well.
- 9.4 Cllr Elsbury (Caerphilly) also reiterates the work pressure on the team. He is aware that the team consists of only 2 members of staff (of which one is currently seconded for a day a week) to run 6 town centres. He states that other authorities have a much better ratio of staff per town. He goes on to state that the Council no longer have a business support team and that the Town Centre Management budget has been reduced. The Caerphilly Basin Masterplan and Strategy states that our "Town Centre Management Team" will help deliver our part of the £1.2bn City Region deal. Cllr Elsbury asks how will it be possible given the already stretched workload of Officers and that we owe a duty of care to all our employee.
- 9.5 Cllr Fussell (Caerphilly) agrees with the views of Cllr Elsbury. Other concerns centre on the fact that reducing the meeting cycle to twice a year will leave our towns lacking the surety that is needed to be a vibrant environment. Currently issues are brought to the TCMG meetings and acted upon in a timely manner; leaving a 6 month gap will only mean a deterioration of this service as a whole, and although TC managers will still visit the town regularly not all issues will be able to be picked up. Cllr Fussell goes on to request that it may also be time to reduce the number of members that sit on the committee as Caerphilly was increased to include adjoining wards which sit outside the area concerned.
- 9.6 Cllr Owen (Risca West) is in favour of increasing the number of towns but fears that creating a 2-tier system will be seen as discriminatory. If Newbridge is given the status which he hopes it will, he suggests that the Council can immediately increase resources by removing and storing the banner systems (not adding to them), a real 'nil impact' saving that could be held until such time as we move out of austerity.
- 9.7 Cllr Davies (Bargoed) is opposed to Bargoed/Ystrad Mynach joint meetings. Cllr Davies is also concerned that the current funding allocated (£40k) for the five current towns will not be increased to cover Newbridge funding.
- 9.8 In summary, the following themes were expressed:-
- Support for the inclusion of Newbridge within the town centre management model but concerns over the level of financial resource available to implement the proposed change.
 - Concerns over the current level of staff resource allocated to town centre management and the additional workload that an additional town would bring.
 - Concerns over the proposed reduction of frequency of the Town Centre Management Group meetings.
 - Opposition to joint Town Centre Management Group meetings – although having tier two meetings one after another may address this concern.
 - A general appreciation of the benefits of the town centre model of management
- 9.9 Concerns relating to the increased workload raised by Councillors have been recognised. The Town Centre Management Team have also raised their own concerns about taking on a new town without additional resources which places a greater pressure on the service delivery. The 2-teir approach has been developed as a way to stretch the existing resource further to include Newbridge town centre but in doing so it is recognised that it places a greater workload on staff.
- 9.10 The concerns expressed by Members and the Town Centre Management Team staff are acknowledged and the development of the scope of the proposed 2-tier system has evolved through extensive liaison with and input from the Town Centre Manager. The Town Centre Management Team has been involved in the development of the proposed 2-Tier approach

and to determine the best ways establishing a manageable workload. Whilst it is acknowledged that the inclusion of Newbridge within the Town Centre Model will initially require additional input from the Town Centre Management Team Members will note that the proposal set out in Para 4.12 above will over time result in a reduction of workload tasks currently undertaken by the Town Centre Management Team. It is anticipated that the adoption of the 2-tier proposal and inclusion of Newbridge within the Town Centre Management regime will result in a combination of additional and reduced tasks and maintain a balanced workload for the Town Centre Management Team. The Head of Regeneration and Planning will continue to monitor the Town Centre Management Team's workload should the 2-Tier proposal be approved by Cabinet for implementation.

- 9.11 As outlined by Cllr Fussell, there will be an impact on the frequency of the meetings to two per annum. This has been proposed to alleviate some of the workload of the Town Centre Management Team to free up capacity to take on management of Newbridge. It is expected that pressing issues raised by local Councillors can be accommodated by Council staff outside of these meeting cycles.
- 9.12 There are no additional financial resources available to the Town Centre Management Team and Councillors are correct in outlining that the current budget allocated towards the five town centres will now need to accommodate works in six.
- 9.13 The views of Cllr Owen have been noted and the deployment of the current banner stock is being reviewed down to two from three per year (per town). The removal of banners altogether has not been investigated as they form a fundamental core part of the Unique Places model of town centre management.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That the Scrutiny Committee recommends the following approach to Cabinet:
- 10.1.1 To adopt a two tier approach to the 'Unique Places' model of Town Centre Management as set out in the report.
- 10.1.2 To designate Newbridge Town Centre as a managed town centre with a town management centre boundary as set out in Appendix 1.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To allow Newbridge to benefit from the current town centre model of management currently being operated by the Council.

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Dave Whetter - Interim Head of Regeneration
Consultees: Cllr. S. Morgan - Cabinet Member for Economy, Infrastructure, Sustainability and Wellbeing of Future Generations
Cllr T. Davies – Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Cllr C. Forehead – Vice Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Rhian Kyte – Head of Regeneration and Planning
Allan Dallimore - Team Leader Urban Renewal
Lisa Lane – Interim Monitoring Officer
Paul Hudson - Marketing and Events Manager
Andrew Highway - Town Centre Development Manager

Anwen Cullinane - Senior Policy Officer
Shaun Watkins - HR Manager
Mike Eedy - Finance Manager
Local Members from each Town Centre Management Group
Newbridge Local Members

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Map of Proposed Newbridge Town Centre Core Management Area

Appendix 2: Town Centre Management Groups Terms of Reference

Background Reports:

Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Report 13th December 2005 - Town Centre Management Groups

Cabinet Report 11th September 2012 - Town Centre Management Groups