



TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE BARGOED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 7TH NOVEMBER 2018 AT 4:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillors:

C Andrews, A Collis, D T Davies, A Higgs, S Morgan

Together with:

Community Councillors V Stephens, H Llewellyn, Inspector O'Keefe (Gwent Police)

Also:

A Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), A. Dallimore (Team Leader – Urban Renewal), C Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), S Wolf-Williams (Health Challenge Wales Co-ordinator), T Evans (Policy Officer), A. Jones (Clerk)

1. TO APPOINT A CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

Mr Highway opened the meeting and asked for nominations for Chair. Councillor Morgan nominated Councillor D T Davies. Councillors voted and the vote was 4 in favour 0 against. Councillor Davies accepted the position of Chair.

Councillor D T Davies asked for nominations for Vice-Chair. Councillor Morgan nominated Councillor Collis, Councillors voted and the vote was 4 in favour 0 against. Councillor Collis accepted the position.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Harding, D Price, R Kyte (Head of Regeneration & Planning), P Hudson (Marketing & Events Manager).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 14TH MARCH 2018

The Chair wished to congratulate the Town Council on the excellent firework display which was well organised and a great success without any issues.

The minutes were taken as read.

5. UPDATE ON MATTERS RELATING TO TOWN

Mr Highway introduced the report which provided an update on matters relating to Bargoed town centre.

The first item to be presented was Civil Parking. A paper copy of a PowerPoint Presentation by the officer was provided to members as part of the minutes pack.

Mr Campbell introduced himself to the group and presented a detailed report on Civil Parking.

The group were advised that the Council will be taking over parking enforcement from Gwent Police on the 8th April 2019.

Councillor Collis expressed concern about there being no enforcement for the months up until the Council takes up the role

Mr Campbell advised that these concerns have been raised with the Chief Constable & Police Commissioner and they will have further discussions to renegotiate possibly extending the deadline.

Mr Campbell confirmed that enforcement will be primarily focused on the town centres, schools and then other areas. The group were informed that there will be 10 Civil Parking Enforcement Officers who will cover the whole of the Borough on a rota which has not been developed yet. Therefore, there is no guarantee that an officer will be in a particular area on a daily basis as the whole Borough needs to be covered.

Councillor Morgan reiterated what Mr Campbell had advised and assured the group that the officers will enforce parking in the town centres and across the County Borough.

The group discussed dangerous parking within the town centre and clarified what the Council will be able to enforce and what the Police will still need to enforce.

Inspector O'Keefe advised that at present enforcement is difficult, particularly where lines are not complete, once the signage has been checked and upgraded where necessary enforcement will prove to be much easier for officers. The Inspector advised the group to report any offences that the Police will still have responsibility for directly to the Police.

Councillor Stephens raised the issue of charging for residents permits and highlighted how in some areas there are more houses than parking spaces available.

Mr Campbell advised that the resident's parking is on a 'first come' basis and he could not advise motorists/residents where to park. The group were told that none of the restrictions will be changed, but in the future there may be an opportunity to review the Traffic Regulation Orders after the Council begins enforcement action.

The Chair thanked Mr Campbell for his report.

The second item to be presented was Electric Vehicle Charging. A paper copy of a PowerPoint Presentation by the officer was provided to members as part of the minutes pack.

Ms Evans introduced herself to the group and presented her report.

The group discussed the introduction of Electric Vehicle Charging points within the car parks in Bargoed.

Councillor Llewellyn expressed his concerns about the introduction of electric vehicles and how this would result in job losses across the car industry.

The Chair requested that Ms Jones note the concerns raised and thanked Councillor Llewellyn for his contribution.

Mr Dallimore pointed out to that the PowerPoint contained a reference to funding and advised that the Council can submit a bid for regional funding from Welsh Government.

The Chair thanked Ms Evans for her update.

The third item to be presented was Local Toilet Strategy. A paper copy of a PowerPoint Presentation by the officer was provided to members as part of the minutes pack.

Ms S Wolf-Williams introduced herself to the group and presented her report. The group were advised that the Council has a statutory duty under the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 to prepare and publish a local toilet strategy.

The group discussed the report in detail and expressed their concerns over the proposed closure of the toilets in town centres under the medium term financial plan. The group were advised by Ms S Wolf-Williams that all Council owned buildings would be making their toilets accessible to the public and were told that a draft strategy report would be going out for consultation shortly (ending 8th of March 2019).

Ms Wolf-Williams urged members of the group to view the draft strategy report and to provide comments and feedback.

The Chair thanked Ms Wolf-Williams.

The fourth item to be presented was Lowry Plaza Shops. Mr Dallimore advised the group that Units 3 and 4 are now operational with the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) taking residency. DWP now employ 30 plus staff from these offices which has led to a rise in footfall in the area around Lowry Plaza.

The DWP fit-out was carried out by Shaylor Group contractors over a 6 month period.

Units 1 and 2 - once Poundworld went into administration a frozen food retailer identified 19 former Poundworld stores as potential new stores, Bargoed being one of them.

The retailer has requested that the Poundworld lease be assigned to them and are working with the Council's solicitors to agree this and obtain senior landlords consent

The retailer has submitted their fit out drawings prior to senior landlords approval. To accommodate the retailer, additional plant machinery will need to be sited on the roof and planning consent obtained for a new shop front.

Unit 6a is still empty and the Council will be looking for the retail agents and its in-house property surveyor to market this once Units 1 & 2 are occupied.

The fifth item to be presented was street scene changes. Mr Dallimore advised that the 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 metal 'Arco' grill drain covers which now rattle in several parts of the town. In trying to establish responsibility for this failure the Council have examined design and the construction materials used. The design has been investigated by the Council's Engineering Structures (EPG) section and found to be sound. Contractors have recently taken core samples of the bedding concrete/cement mix and had it tested to establish if it is as per the specification drawings. The results indicate that the bedding material of several samples was not up to strength.

The Council's legal section have been asked to check the contract documents to establish if the Council can make a claim against the contractor who installed the channel blocks.

Mr Dallimore informed the group that following a walk through the town attended by the Cabinet member, the AM's representative, local members, the Town Council, and officers of the Council. It was agreed that the Council would explore re-introducing car parking bays.

The Council's EPG team have produced a report with a number of options for retro fitting additional car parking spaces into the street scene through the town centre. These have been costed in the report and officers and the Cabinet member are currently trying to establish funding to take these forward. In addition the costs of taking out the granite channel blocks and replacing with tarmac has been investigated and costed. Councillor Morgan confirmed plans have been drawn up and he is looking to see how this is to be funded including the issues with granite blocks.

The Chair thanked Mr Dallimore and Councillor Morgan.

The sixth item to be presented was Retail Plateau residual lands. Mr Dallimore advised that he had previously reported to the group that 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 Companies Managing Director has given approval for them to pursue the site purchase.

Heads of Terms have been presented to the Council including an initial purchase figure. 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.

As reported to the group in March, this Cabinet report was approved on 31st January and officers have been in regular dialogue with the company over the sales terms.

The pub restaurant company have spent the last few months undertaking their due diligence, site investigation and ecology surveys and have put together a detailed design. This design has been the basis of pre application discussions with the council. As the land was formed using Welsh Government (WG) Land Reclamation Grant, WG have clawback on the site. At present the pub restaurant company have reduced their original offer based on a number of adnormals they have found through their site investigations and design. WG's land surveyors have been asked to agree to this reduction.

The pub/restaurant chain has opened a dialogue with Bargoed Estates over the use of space in the Morrison's car park. Legally the council have secured the right for the developers of the land to use the car park and this legal document now needs to be used as the basis of an agreement between Bargoed Estates and the pub/restaurant chain.

Councillor Llewellyn asked how much the claw back was. Mr Dallimore confirmed that circa 80% of capital receipts will go back to WG.

The Seventh item to be presented was High Street Heroes.

Mr Highway advised the group that Mr Wilcox has moved on to a new post with Business Support and would like to record thanks for his work in Town Centre Management.

Mr Highway advised that the voucher booklet will not be offered this year and introduced his presentation on High Street Heroes and explained how this will help to support retailers on the High Street.

In respect of Business Rates, Mr Highway confirmed that he has met with the retailers in Blackwood town centre together with Councillor Morgan and the local AM's representative. Following this meeting Councillor Morgan has written to the Cabinet Secretary expressing his concern over business rates on behalf of retailers

The group were also advised that the Leader of the Council has supported a reduction in business rates for small businesses and sent a letter to Welsh Government.

The Chair thanked Mr Highway.

6. BARGOED TOWN CENTRE AUDIT

Mr Highway presented the report and the following items were raised.

Insecure carriageway grills. Mr Dallimore confirmed that he will take this up with the contractor to see how defects can be fixed and determine who will be responsible.

Cleansing Issues at Bargoed bus station. Mr Highway confirmed power washing has been added to the works programme.

Anti-social behaviour Morrison's. Mr Highway has met with the Police and store manager and agreed an 11 point plan on how to prevent the anti-social behaviour including closing barrier, turning the lights off, Police patrols and recruiting a security guard.

Inspector O'Keefe confirmed that the Police have offered Morrison's staff training.

The Chair thanked officers and Inspector O'Keefe.

The group discussed the damage to figurines and understood that 4 individuals have been identified and have accepted responsibility for the damage. The group expressed the anger in the town and understood that the identification of the individuals would be best kept anonymous.

The Chair thanked officers and police.

There were no further issues raised.

The meeting closed at 17:30

CHAIR