



## **BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 2ND APRIL 2019**

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

**REPORT BY: TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**

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### **1. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

In October 2018, Welsh Government announced its provisional budget settlement; under the settlement Caerphilly County Borough Councils faced a funding reduction of 0.3%, this coupled with inescapable pressures that the Council has to fund, meant that the Council needed to find savings of over £15.6 million for the next year alone.

As part of the draft budget proposals for 2019/20, the closure of all 5 Public Conveniences was presented as a saving proposal (£74,000).

The draft budget which included this saving underwent a comprehensive consultation process held over a period of six weeks from the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018 to the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2019, with the views expressed to be fed back to and considered by elected members at a Special meeting of full Council in February 2019.

The consultation included officer representation at the Community Council Liaison Committee (21<sup>st</sup> November 2018), Newline, Council's website, Special Scrutiny Committee meetings, Town Centre Engagement and Public Drop in Centres. Drop in sessions were held in 9 venues across the county borough between the 26<sup>th</sup> November and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018 (Rhymney Library, Bargoed Library, Caerphilly Library, New Tredegar White Rose Centre, Risca Palace, Newbridge Tabernacle, Nelson Library and Blackwood Library).

Town and Community Councils also received this information via their Community Council Liaison Officer – Caerphilly Conversation engagement email (22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018) and a copy of the final budget proposals circulated to all clerks on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

At the meeting of Special Council on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019, elected members approved the final budget proposals including the closure of the 5 public conveniences (recommendation 10.1.2 – Appendix 2 – page 16). Following the decision of Council, notices were placed in each of the public conveniences and the closure will come into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

### **2. BLACKWOOD 2020 CELEBRATION – AN UPDATE WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE MEETING**

### 3. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT

- Traffic Regulation Order remedial works have been substantially completed.
- The Traffic Regulation Order consolidation order has been advertised and will be concluded by the 8<sup>th</sup> April.
- A Service Level Agreement has been signed with Rhondda Cynnon Taf County Borough Council to provide back office support for the civil parking enforcement process within Caerphilly County Borough Council.
- All Civil Enforcement Officers have been recruited and trained. During March the officers have been undertaking an extensive exercise across the county borough to issue warning notices to drivers advising them of parking restrictions.

### 4. ARTISAN MARKET – VERBAL UPDATE

### 5. BLACKWOOD RETAIL OVERVIEW 2018

#### **Blackwood 2018**

It has been a challenging year for Blackwood town centre following a very successful 2017. During 2018 the town saw a total of 24 businesses close their doors. Some closures such as *Carpet Right*, *Poundworld* and *Dorothy Perkins* were taken as multiple retailers reacted to falling consumer spend and rising costs by closing stores. Other independent retailers closed due to a variety of reasons, but the tough trading environment undoubtedly played a part in their decision making process.

There were however a number of new independent businesses which opened throughout 2018 these included: *Trendy Tots Boutique*, *Thomas Recruitment Group*, *Bliss* and *Shear Divinity*. It was noticeable that no national retailers opened on the high street through the whole of 2018.

*The Market Place Shopping Centre* lost a number of its tenants during the year. Despite changing marketing agents and embarking on a proactive letting strategy it failed to fill the vacant units. On a positive note the former *Somerfield* unit was split into three and the largest unit was let to *Snap Fitness 24/7* which is a lifestyle gym offers. This new lettings policy signalled a change in direction for the centre as the owners looked to develop the asset by submitting an ambitious planning application.

Two prominent sites within the town centre still provide an opportunity to extend Blackwood's retail / service offer. The owners of the former *Store 21* building continue to assess how the site could be used in the future. Whilst the former *Poundstretchers* site has now been passed to retail agents and marketed as a redevelopment opportunity.

#### **UK Retail Overview 2018**

The fabric of the UK's high streets fundamentally changed in 2018. Well established household names such as *Toys r Us*, *Maplin*, *Poundworld*, *The Original Factor Shop* and even *House of Fraser* have either disappeared or fallen into administration. This has left gaps in many prime town and city centre locations and seen nervous retailers dramatically reducing the number of stores within their property portfolio. Smaller town centres have been particularly hard hit with the likes of *Dorothy Perkins*, *New Look* and *Carpetright* all closing stores in prominent town centre locations. There is no single reason for the current downturn on the high street, rather it is a case of a number of different factors combining together. These include a squeeze on household budgets, the continued shift to experiential and online shopping, rising household overheads and an over capacity in many retail sectors. During 2018 more high street banks were lost and this is expected to continue in 2019 with banks realigning their service into a district centre model which locally means directing customers to Blackwood and Caerphilly.

## Footfall Data

2018

Q1	Commencing	Week Total	Year Total
Week 01	Mon 1-Jan-2018	25,898	25,898
Week 02	Mon 8-Jan-2018	27,971	53,869
Week 03	Mon 15-Jan-2018	26,420	80,289
Week 04	Mon 22-Jan-2018	26,714	107,003
Week 05	Mon 29-Jan-2018	28,209	135,212
Week 06	Mon 5-Feb-2018	26,250	161,462
Week 07	Mon 12-Feb-2018	28,024	189,486
Week 08	Mon 19-Feb-2018	32,982	222,468
Week 09	Mon 26-Feb-2018	17,156	239,624
Week 10	Mon 5-Mar-2018	35,404	275,028
Week 11	Mon 12-Mar-2018	30,199	305,227
Week 12	Mon 19-Mar-2018	31,938	337,165
Week 13	Mon 26-Mar-2018	30,868	368,033
Quarter		368,033	

Q2	Commencing	Week Total	Year Total
Week 14	Mon 2-Apr-2018	32,156	400,189
Week 15	Mon 9-Apr-2018	34,782	434,971
Week 16	Mon 16-Apr-2018	31,870	466,841
Week 17	Mon 23-Apr-2018	30,219	497,060
Week 18	Mon 30-Apr-2018	32,752	529,812
Week 19	Mon 7-May-2018	30,025	559,837
Week 20	Mon 14-May-2018	33,772	593,609
Week 21	Mon 21-May-2018	32,290	625,899
Week 22	Mon 28-May-2018	32,795	658,694
Week 23	Mon 4-Jun-2018	33,586	692,280
Week 24	Mon 11-Jun-2018	32,891	725,171
Week 25	Mon 18-Jun-2018	34,185	759,356
Week 26	Mon 25-Jun-2018	33,062	792,418
Quarter		424,385	

Q3	Commencing	Week Total	Year Total
Week 27	Mon 2-Jul-2018	31,769	824,187
Week 28	Mon 9-Jul-2018	33,363	857,550
Week 29	Mon 16-Jul-2018	34,249	891,799
Week 30	Mon 23-Jul-2018	32,597	924,396
Week 31	Mon 30-Jul-2018	36,818	961,214
Week 32	Mon 6-Aug-2018	32,713	993,927
Week 33	Mon 13-Aug-2018	33,066	1,026,993
Week 34	Mon 20-Aug-2018	32,360	1,059,353

Q4	Commencing	Week Total	Year Total
Week 40	Mon 1-Oct-2018	30,150	1,241,575
Week 41	Mon 8-Oct-2018	27,808	1,269,383
Week 42	Mon 15-Oct-2018	28,062	1,297,445
Week 43	Mon 21-Oct-2019	27,090	1,328,776
Week 44	Mon 28-Oct-2019	34,589	1,363,365
Week 45	Mon 4-Nov-2019	31,408	1,394,773
Week 46	Mon 11-Nov-2019	35,248	1,430,021
Week 47	Mon 18-Nov-2019	31,632	1,461,653

<b>Week 35</b>	<b>Mon 27-Aug-2018</b>	33,586	1,092,939
<b>Week 36</b>	<b>Mon 3-Sep-2018</b>	32,173	1,125,112
<b>Week 37</b>	<b>Mon 10-Sep-2018</b>	30,938	1,156,050
<b>Week 38</b>	<b>Mon 17-Sep-2018</b>	25,768	1,181,818
<b>Week 39</b>	<b>Mon 24-Sep-2018</b>	29,607	1,211,425
Quarter		419,007	

<b>Week 48</b>	<b>Mon 25-Nov-2019</b>	39,164	1,500,817
<b>Week 49</b>	<b>Mon 2-Dec-2019</b>	37,891	1,538,708
<b>Week 50</b>	<b>Mon 9-Dec-2019</b>	39,969	1,578,677
<b>Week 51</b>	<b>Mon 16-Dec-2019</b>	51,232	1,629,909
<b>Week 52</b>	<b>Mon 23-Dec-2019</b>	33,880	1,663,789
Quarter		448,123	

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