



## **BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP - 20TH MARCH 2015**

**SUBJECT: CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET @ CHRISTMAS – ANALYSIS REPORT**

**REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides information on the 'Choose the High Street @ Christmas' Voucher Booklet Scheme, which ran across the County Borough's five principal town centres in the three weeks leading up to Christmas 2014.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The report provides details of the 'Choose the High Street @ Christmas' Voucher Booklet Scheme, which the Town Centre Management Team ran over Christmas 2014. Included in the report are details of how the scheme was operated, the numbers of retailers participating, marketing platforms used, along with feedback from questionnaires sent out to participating businesses and an online public survey.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The Council has agreed to a five-year regeneration programme entitled "People, Businesses and Places". The proposals within the strategy are based on a number of regeneration principles, one of which is "Strengthening Town Centres".
- 3.2 "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.

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 Over the last two years, in the lead up to Christmas the 'Unique Places Discount Card' scheme has been run in the principal town centres with the aim of assisting retailers to generate sales. In 2012, a total of 60 offers were submitted and in 2013 that number rose to 80. After assessing the feedback provided by retailers, it was decided that a different approach would be taken for Christmas 2014. Instead of using a discount card and website which retailers said was too complicated, a printed voucher booklet was produced. Retailers in the five managed town centres were invited to submit an offer for inclusion in the booklet, with the level of discount being set at their discretion. Participation in the voucher booklet scheme generated greater interest from retailers than the discount card, with a total of 90 offers being received.

4.2 The booklet was designed by the Council's Graphic Design Team, originally in a raffle ticket style book. However, as the volume of offers submitted by retailers was higher than expected, it was necessary to change the design into a booklet format to accommodate them all. A total of 40,000 Voucher Booklets were produced and distributed by the Community Safety Wardens to the following locations:

- Caerphilly: Library / Customer First Centre / Visitor Centre / Cadwaladers / Grazing Ground / Whetherspoons - The Malcolm Uphill;
- Blackwood: Library / Customer First Centre / Blackwood Miners Institute / Tidal Stores / Maxime Cinema;
- Bargoed: Library / Customer First Centre / Comfort Zone;
- Risca: Library / Customer First Centre;
- Ystrad Mynach: Library.

4.3 In addition, every school in the County Borough was offered a supply of Voucher booklets. In total, 28 schools requested booklets for their pupils and staff, these were delivered using the Council's courier service.

### Marketing Platforms

4.4 A number of different marketing platforms were used to promote the scheme, including:

- Newspaper adverts – *Cardiff & South Wales Advertiser / Caerphilly Observer / The Campaign*;
- *Heart FM* radio advertisement;
- Social media engagement on the Council's *Facebook / Twitter* accounts;
- A *YouTube* video was produced by Council's Communications Team;
- Article in the Council's *Newsline* which was delivered to every household in the County Borough;
- Inclusion on the CCBC corporate website.

### Retailer Participation

4.5 The table shows the number of retailers taking part in the scheme compared to those in the previous two years.

Town Centre	Number of Offers in 2014	Number of Offers in 2013	Number of Offers in 2012
Caerphilly	29	26	24
Blackwood	26	24	20
Bargoed	23	21	14
Risca	6	4	5
Ystrad Mynach	2	4	N/A
Offers in other towns	4	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>64</b>

### Retail Engagement

4.6 The Town Centre Management team made visits to retailers in the five town centres explaining the scheme and encouraging participation. Once again a number of businesses from outside the managed town centres expressed an interest in joining the scheme and were accommodated in the 'Offers in Other Towns' section of the booklet.

## Retailer Survey

- 4.7 A survey was sent out to all retailers who participated in the scheme and the results are shown in the table below. A total of 90 surveys were sent out and 44 returned, giving a response rate of 49%, which was the highest number of returns from retailers in the three years that a Christmas scheme has been run. A summary of the responses can be found below:

Question			
1. Was the Choose the High Street @ Christmas voucher booklet beneficial to your business?	<b>Yes</b> 43%	<b>No</b> 57%	
2. Did the voucher booklet bring new customers?	<b>Yes</b> 38%	<b>No</b> 62%	
3. Did the voucher booklet work better than the discount card used in 2012/13	<b>Yes</b> 47%	<b>No</b> 53%	
4. Did you feel that the scheme was well-publicised?	<b>Yes</b> 63%	<b>No</b> 57%	
5. Would you consider taking part in a discount scheme in the future?	<b>Yes</b> 91%	<b>No</b> 9%	
6. Would you prefer a summer or Christmas discount scheme?	<b>Summer</b> 5%	<b>Christmas</b> 33%	<b>Both</b> 62%

- 4.8 The take up of offers in individual businesses varied considerably. Although 41% of participants had no vouchers redeemed, those businesses where customers did use the vouchers reported that they had seen between 1-150 vouchers redeemed. The huge disparity in the number of vouchers redeemed suggests that strength of the offer was a key factor in whether customers used a voucher or not.
- 4.9 It is positive to note that despite the varying success of the offers amongst participating businesses, 91% of respondents would consider taking part in the scheme if it were run again. This high volume suggests that retailers see not only the transactional value, but also the free promotional benefit of being part of the scheme.

## Public Survey

- 4.10 To supplement the retailers' survey, an online survey was also conducted asking members of the public for their views on the Voucher Booklet and the campaign to promote it.
- 4.11 The responses were gained through a combination of electronic media (social media and email), and despite a low number of responses (39), the survey did provide a useful insight into any possible emerging trends in terms of the public's perception of the scheme.
- 4.12 Encouragingly, 69% of respondents were aware of the scheme, with all avenues of publicity and promotion (newspaper, CCBC Newslines, CCBC social media, CCBC website, radio advert and event stewards) being acknowledged. 35% of respondents felt that the voucher booklet encouraged them to shop locally last Christmas, with 28% saying that they spent money in the County Borough that they would otherwise have spent elsewhere, which would have boosted the local economy and assisted local businesses in the crucial pre-Christmas trading period.
- 4.13 An open question was included at the end of the survey that asked people how they felt the scheme could be improved in the future, which provided some very useful comments – generally, people felt that the offers needed to be better for them to participate and that the booklets should be distributed to every household in the Borough. A full list of the comments can be found in **Appendix 1**.

## **Conclusion**

- 4.14 This year's scheme took a different approach than previous years with a move away from website based offers to vouchers printed in a booklet. However, this presented substantial design and logistical challenges which were overcome showing the strength of corporate working across divisions and the commitment of staff at libraries and Customer First centres to enthusiastically promote the initiative to customers.
- 4.15 The take up from the retailers was key to the success of this year's scheme and the number of offers and positive response show that a physical offer contained in a booklet, rather than one on a web site is more effective in driving sales. Therefore, future campaigns will concentrate on evolving and refining the voucher booklet approach.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the council's Eqia process does not need to be applied.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The campaign was funded through the Town Centre Management core budget.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct personnel implications.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 No there are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 This report is for information only.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Public Survey Comments