



CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE ON TUESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2014 AT 2:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillors:

C. Forehead, C. Elsbury, J. Fussell, K. James, B. Jones, S. Kent, J. Pritchard

Together with:

K. Williams (Clerk, Caerphilly Town Council), J. Dilworth (Clerk, Van Community Council),
T. Payne (Cadw), S. Cooper (Caerphilly Access Group)

Also:

A. Highway (Town Centre Development Manager), S. Wilcox (Assistant Town Centre
Manager), A. Dallimore (Team Leader - Urban Renewal), G. Richards (Highways
Maintenance Manager), A. Jones (Complaints Officer), M. Godfrey (Environmental Health
Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors: P. Bevan, E. Forehead

Inspector Jones (Gwent Police), M. Hall (Van Community Council), K. Robottom (Caerphilly
Residents' Association), P. Hudson (Marketing and Events Manager), A. Jones (Complaints
Officer)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (3RD JUNE 2014)

Previous minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. AIR QUALITY UPDATE

Ms. Godfrey informed the group that Welsh Government has now officially adopted the Air
Quality Action Plan (AQAP), which means that it will now become a formal document.

Over the next six to twelve months, modelling for the various scenarios contained within the AQAP will be carried out. Although each individual action point within the AQAP may seem negligible, the cumulative effects could be large and the modelling exercises will assist in looking at the long-term, overall impact.

Procurement for Consultants to assist in the implementation of the AQAP is underway, with the draft tender nearing completion. It is anticipated that the Consultants for the next three-years should be appointed by late February 2015.

5. FORMER LIBRARY AT MORGAN JONES PARK

Mr. Dallimore provided an update on behalf of Property Services, which is the department leading on this project. A number of organisations had expressed an interest in utilising the site and a tendering process is now underway. A total of nineteen organisations were invited to submit a business case for their use of the site by the end of November 2014, but only approximately five submissions are anticipated.

A scoring matrix has already been developed to score each of the business case submissions. Once this scoring process has taken place, the results will be taken to the Asset Management Group, followed by Cabinet in Spring 2015.

Members asked if a date had been set for the relevant Asset Management Group. Mr. Dallimore was not aware of the date of the meeting, but agreed to circulate it to the members of the group in due course.

6. SENGHENYDD MEMORIAL PLAQUE

Mr. Dallimore informed the group that the Senghenydd memorial plaque, donated by the late Mr. Kenneth Arthur Williams, has now been fabricated and installed in the footway outside the new Library in The Twyn. The Aber Valley Heritage Group agreed the image and inscription on the plaque.

The total cost for the plaque was approximately £1,500. This will be donated entirely by Mr. Williams' Estate.

7. "CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET" CAMPAIGN

Mr. Highway informed the group that the Portas Review (2011) identified several threats to town centres. The "Choose the High Street" (CTHS) campaign aimed to promote the County Borough's principal town centres to the public and businesses alike. Starting in the summer of 2014, the CTHS initiative used several platforms to highlight the brand and town centres; these included: free cotton shopping bags bearing the logo, billboards in the town centres, balloons and leaflets distributed at summer events and a series of YouTube videos.

The number of new businesses and potential business enquiries were summarised in the report, along with feedback from business and public surveys, which gave differing perceptions of the campaign. However, it was noted that there was a very small number of business surveys received.

The campaign is intended to be long-term, aiming to make people change their attitudes and shopping habits to support local businesses. Cllr. Elsbury asked how long the campaign is likely to continue. Mr. Highway stated that it would continue as long as budgetary commitments allowed, bearing in mind the Medium Term Financial Plan for the Authority.

8. "CHOOSE THE HIGH STREET @ CHRISTMAS" INITIATIVE

Mr. Highway provided an overview of the "Choose the High Street @ Christmas" campaign, which aims to link in with the existing, ongoing campaign, but also continue the Christmas discount scheme that has been run since 2012.

Following feedback from previous years, it was decided that the format for 2014 would be slightly different. During the last two years, any offers submitted by businesses were listed on a Website. To redeem the relevant offer, the consumer would present a discount card at the time of sale. This was deemed to be too complicated by businesses and was supported by the fact that transactional use of the card was low, despite 30,000 cards being distributed across the County Borough.

The Christmas 2014 format is based around a voucher booklet. To redeem an offer, the relevant voucher is cut out from the booklet and presented at the time of sale. Businesses were sent a letter, sign-up form and prepaid return envelope with the Town Centre Gazette and this simpler format has proved popular, resulting in 92 offers being received – the highest to date.

Voucher booklets will be available in Libraries and Customer First centres in the town centres, as well as at some of the visitor attractions. Publicity of the scheme, which goes live on 1st December 2014, will be via Heart FM, The South Wales Advertiser, Caerphilly Observer, Newline, CCBC's Website and social media.

A second element of the Christmas campaign is the launch of a "Pop-Up Shop Guide" that outlines the steps that need to be undertaken in order to establish a short-term use of a property. This is particularly useful for budding entrepreneurs who want to try a business model during the key pre-Christmas trading period. The guide is available in both hard and electronic copy.

Cllr. Fussell noted that there doesn't appear to be a link to the electronic version of the Guide on the page of the Website that publicises it.

9. CAERPHILLY CHRISTMAS MARKET 2014

Mr. Highway noted that apologies had been received from Mr. Hudson, so provided an update on the event. There will be a total of 90 stalls located throughout the town centre, along with a range of entertainment and activities.

Although the event is now well known, an extensive promotional campaign will be used again this year. To this end, a request for funding of £2,000 from the Area Forum Budget was made to pay for a regional radio campaign specifically for the Caerphilly event. The available balance was approximately £7,500.

Members unanimously agreed to the £2,000 of funding, with eight votes in favour. There were no abstentions.

10. ADVERTS ON THE HIGHWAY

Cllr. Pritchard explained that he asked for this item to be placed on the agenda following discussions with local businesses. Many businesses feel that the lack of advertising since the adoption of the A Frame Protocol has negatively impacted on their profits, particularly businesses in side streets that can no longer advertise on the junction to that street. As such, Cllr. Pritchard asked what scope Officers have to assist businesses.

Mr. Richards informed the group that extensive consultation took place on the draft policy, including all Town Centre Management Groups, prior to it being endorsed by Cabinet. The policy is now in force and is very comprehensive, which makes it very difficult for Officers to deviate from it. However, there is an appeals process contained within the policy. Part of the rationale for the policy was to address the Authority's insurance liabilities. These have reduced from £1.4m to £600k partly as a result of the policy's adoption.

Cllr. Fussell noted that the policy has made the street scene tidier and less cluttered, as well as making the town centres safer and more accessible for wheelchair users and the visually impaired. Representatives of the Caerphilly Access Group that were present supported the latter element.

Mr. Dallimore has been working with colleagues in Highways and Transportation to look at alternatives such as signage directing shoppers to side streets. Finger posts are due to be installed in the 2014/15 financial year that will direct shoppers to some of the side streets. Some standardised highways signage is also being looked at.

Officers will continue to work individually with businesses that raise queries or concerns.

11. CAERPHILLY TOWN CENTRE AUDIT – OCTOBER 2014

Cllr. Jones raised concerns in relation to the public toilets in The Twyn and the amount of time the issue has been on the Audit. Mr. Highway noted that the urgent repairs referred to in the Audit were carried out promptly, but a long-term solution is being sought. Mr. Highway will ask the Waste Strategy and Operations Manager to contact Cllr. Jones with an update.

Mr. Dallimore provided an update on the new notice board and informed the group that as the board is to be installed adjacent to The Principality building, the landlord's consent is required. Several requests have been made, but the landlord has not yet responded. Officers will continue to chase.

Mr. Dallimore noted that the railings on Pentrebane Street have now been installed.

In relation to the former Phaze shop, Mr. Highway has been informed that the building is due to be reoccupied in time for pre-Christmas trading.

Members of the group noted that there are still some rough sleepers in the Park Lane area of the town. Mr. Highway offered to make the multi-agency working group that has been established aware of the Park Lane issue.

Cllr. Kent asked for a new item to be added to the Audit in relation to a step near The Twyn Community Centre that has sunk, which is causing a trip hazard. Mr. Highway agreed to add the item to the Audit and Mr. Dallimore would investigate the issue.

There were no further matters arising in relation to the Audit.

The meeting closed at 3:16 pm

CHAIRMAN