

Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) 12th February 2008
Report of the Chairman of the Town Centre Task and Finish Group

The following is an update of the recommended actions contained in the report.

- (i) *that the number of retail outlets vacant in Barry Town Centre be considered with different marketing techniques being employed:-*
- Discussions with private sector landlords have taken place to ensure they are aware of the direction the Council wishes to take e.g. Nigel Esterkin and the Tesco Express idea.
 - Exploring the idea of vacancies being advertised on the Barry Towntalk website.
 - General consideration to vacant retail outlets is being considered as part of the "town centre relaunch" currently under consideration.
- (ii) *That E & E Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet the lobbying of central government in respect of business rates and the possibility of introducing a sliding scale for new businesses.*
- This has not been done, but may require a recommendation to Cabinet by Committee.
- (iii) *That Cabinet consider how it could assist local businesses within the area, in particular relating to advertising and the development of an Events Programme for the Town Hall, Library and King Square.*
- An events programme is being developed (subject to sustained funding for town centre management and events).
- (iv) *That consideration be given to trimming the trading area of Holton Road*
- The Town Centre Living Study (currently in draft form) will address this issue.
- (v) *That the use of grants to assist business start up and retention in the area be explored.*
- Once budgets for 2008/9 have been agreed, the Economic Development Unit will be reviewing its business start up grants. There are however limits set on direct financial assistance, towards business costs, by state aid regulations.

- In September 2007 the Council in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government launched a Commercial Renewal Area in Holton Road. Financial assistance is available in the designated area to encourage high standard external building improvements. Grant assistance for eligible works is offered on a discretionary basis up to a maximum of 50%.
- (vi) *That car parking charges remain free until further regeneration of the area takes place*
- This was agreed by "The Car Park Working Group", in 2005/6 chaired by Director of Environmental and Economic Regeneration, until such a time when the trading environment of Barry town centre was more stable and able to cope with the consideration of introducing parking charges.
- (vii) *That accommodation above retail outlets be recommended for conversion to residential use*
- This is being considered by the Town Centre Living Study which is the subject of consultation at present.
- (viii) *that future literature on the town be encouraged to include details of all new facilities within the town.*
- This is something that Economic Development Unit will be considering in 2008 (cross reference with comments in respect of actions (i), (iii) and (xiv)).
- (ix) *that the outcome of the town centre living study be presented to the Scrutiny Committee when available*
- The final report will be scheduled for consideration in 2008.
- (x) *that the Town Centre Manager continues to encourage retailers into the area by advising of the strengths and weaknesses of the area and outlining the proposed future developments*
- This is an ongoing process.
- (xi) *that a supermarket be encouraged to the area (town centre)*

- Considerable discussions took place between Tesco Express, the Town Centre Manager and a private developer. The private developer's agent have suggested that they are fairly confident a convenience store will be interested in taking up space in Barry Town Centre.
- (xii) *that a report outlining options for the establishment of a coffee shop/tea room within Holton Road be presented to Scrutiny Committee (E&E).*
- Committee has considered this matter in relation to the Town Hall Exhibition area and a further report will be prepared following further consideration.
- (xiii) *that Barry town centre be linked to any promotions that the Vale of Glamorgan as a Council undertakes throughout the Vale*
- A specific link of news items and shopping information for all four of the principal town centres is made through the towntalk websites.

www.barrytowntalk.co.uk www.penarthtowntalk.co.uk
www.cowbridgetowntalk.co.uk www.llantwitmajortowntalk.co.uk

- (xiv) *that promotional material for Barry move towards a re-branding of the town centre along the lines of "stylish but inclusive"*

The newly appointed Operational Manager for Countryside and Economic Projects, the Principal Officer for Regeneration and the newly appointed Principal Economic Development Officer are currently working up a proposal to put before the private sector in terms of working in partnership to rebrand and relaunch Barry town centre.

- (xv) *that Scrutiny committee maintains a watching brief on the future regeneration of the town*

A variety of the projects highlighted above will be considered by Cabinet/Committee in due course.

It should be noted that a number of the above actions, particularly (iii), (v) and (xiv), all require resources which are not currently available at a time when all budgets are subject to potential efficiency savings. With regard to (x), the post of Town Centre Manager is currently vacant.