

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE
REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 21ST
OCTOBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors P. Edwards (Vice-Chair)
G. A. Davies
J. Millard
J. C. Morgan
J. P. Morgan
L. Parsons
K. Rowson
B. Willis
M. Cook
S. Healy

WITH: Corporate Director of Regeneration &
Community Services
Head of Regeneration & Development
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Team Leader Thriving Communities
Business & Regeneration Manager
Service Manager Development & Estates
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Elias and H. McCarthy.</p> <p>It was reported that Councillors S. Healy and M. Cook was in attendance acting as substitutes for Councillors G. Collier and M. Holland. However, should Councillor Collier or Holland attend the meeting, then Councillors Healy and Cook would leave.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the special Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd September, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>Councillors P. Edwards and J.C. Morgan asked that their names be recorded against approval of the minutes.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>There were no actions arising from the special meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd September, 2020.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 2ND DECEMBER 2020</u></p> <p>The Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on 2nd December, 2020 was submitted.</p> <p>It was reported that ‘Report Submitted By’ on the first page should be amended to read Councillor John Hill, Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>A Member referred to the Information Pack items, namely the Business Improvement District (BID) Update report and asked that this be brought into the FWP moving forward.</p>	

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted.

No. 7

TOWN CENTRE TASK AND FINISH AND ECONOMIC RESPONSE FOLLOWING COVID-19

Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which provided Members with an update on the work of the Task and Finish Group and sought agreement to re-establish the Task and Finish group to continue their work on a Town Centre Strategy.

The Officer said in December 2019 the Regeneration Scrutiny approved a report to establish a Town Centre Task and Finish Group with the membership as follows:

Councillor Joanna Wilkins

Councillor Keri Rowson

Councillor Wayne Hodgins

Councillor Phil Edwards

Councillor John Morgan

Councillor Lee Parsons

Councillor John Hill

The membership ensured that all town centres had representation at a local level, and two meetings of the group were held prior to the Covid lockdown period.

In terms of membership of the Group moving forward, the Officer reported that at the Council's AGM Councillor Joanna Wilkins was

appointed Executive Member for Environment and as a result would no longer sit on the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

However, despite this there still remained sufficient representation for the towns across the remaining Members of the Task and Finish Group.

The Officer reported that during March the Council was invited by the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government to submit an application to receive revenue funding support, and each LA across Wales was able to access up to £25,000 through the Welsh Government Transforming Towns programme. The money was earmarked for spend on possible options which included developing masterplans; digital projects and provisions; community/stakeholder engagement; empty property/enforcement work; green infrastructure audit; place branding.

It was therefore proposed to take forward an overall place branding approach for Blaenau Gwent which will be supported by each of the towns and the areas they most want to 'shout' about. This would also be supported through the investigation of how a digital approach could support the traditional 'bricks and mortar' trading. Additional to the place branding work, an agreed programme of marketing and communications to support the town centres would be developed and put into action, with support from the Town Centre Forums.

The Officer also reported that a Town Centre Business Development Officer had recently been appointed to commence on the 1st November, 2020. This post would be key in taking forward the work of the Task and Finish Group, and delivery of the Town Centre Strategy; and supporting town centre businesses.

The Officer then went through the Options highlighted in the report and confirmed that in advance of the first Task and Finish Group meeting, Members would be provided with a briefing note of previous discussions, along with a short presentation at the start of the meeting to refresh previous discussions and confirm the next steps. This meeting would also include discussion and agreement

on timescales for the Task and Finish Group and reporting of outcomes.

A Member said he welcomed the report, and the appointment of a Town Centre Business Development Officer. In terms of membership of the Group he said he was happy to represent Abertillery moving forward, with the agreement of Members.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and re-establish the Task and Finish Group (with the existing membership); and recommence their consideration of the Town Centre Strategy. The Group would revisit previous areas considered to ensure that they aligned with any COVID-19 adaptations that may be required, but the focus would be upon the remaining areas not yet discussed with a view towards concluding the work of the Task and Finish Group as soon as possible. (Option 1)

No. 8

BRYNMAWR AND NANTYGLO MASTERPLAN

Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.

The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which provided an update on the Masterplan commissioned for key sites within Brynmawr and Nantyglo, and sought endorsement on a proposed series of recommendations.

The Officer said Brynmawr was the focal point for the communities of the Upper Ebbw Fach Valley. However, as with all town centres, the sustained fall in footfall presented a real challenge, and therefore a focus on projects and measures to attract people

in the area was important. The defined study area straddled both the Brynmawr and Nantyglo wards with the key principles of the study focusing specifically on key strategic sites. Development scenarios and routes to market have been identified for each of the sites, and consultants have also carried out market analysis against each of the development options; developed initial schematics for each of the scenarios, and carried out consultation activity which included Blaenau Gwent Officers, Member engagement and public consultation.

A Member said he welcomed the report, but stressed the importance of flexibility within the Masterplan moving forward to take into account development of any further potential sites.

In response the Officer assured that the document would be fluid, and said it provided a foundation and the principles on which each site and decision would be taken forward.

A brief discussion ensued when the Officer clarified points raised by Members.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted, and endorsed the findings of the Brynmawr and Nantyglo Masterplan and agreed to the next steps for work to be undertaken in the following areas:-

- Development of funding applications to support further activity (site investigations, site acquisition and demolition);
- Continued dialogue with key stakeholders; and
- Further develop potential development options for the Brynmawr Boilerhouse (delivery model, funding options, future use). (*Option 2*)