

MINUTES OF MEETING OF BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL'S PLANNING COMMITTEE

AT CARNEGIE HOUSE

On Wednesday 15th January 2020 at 11.30 am

Present: Cllr D Unwin, Cllr A Wathan, Cllr S Baldwin, Cllr R Marsh, Cllr T Wood

In Attendance: Mrs L Edwards (Town Clerk), Ms J Brown (Democratic Services Officer)

1. To receive apologies for absence

- No apologies received.

2. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interest

- There were no declarations of interest.

3. To receive and confirm the Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee of Wednesday 11th December 2019

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting of Wednesday 11th December 2019 were received and confirmed as a true record and duly signed.

Matters arising:

Page 1. Heol Loveluck. It was noted that no further response had been received from BCBC.

Page 2. The Old Stone Bridge. It was noted that no response had been received from either BCBC or CADW.

4. That the Chairperson accepts the Committee addendum sheet (if any) in order to allow for Committee to consider necessary modifications to the Committee report, so as to take account of late representations and revisions that need to be accommodated:

- Addendum sheet accepted.

5. Planning Applications Received:

- Please refer to Planning Applications Spreadsheet attached at the end of the minutes.
- The Planning Committee's Recommendations appear in the end column in bold type.

6. Pre-Planning Application Consultations

Town Clerk advised that no pre-planning applications had been received.

7.1. Correspondence

- a) Chair provided an update on Planning appeal ref: APP/F6915/A/19/3237153 regarding Land off Tondu Road North of Pascoes Avenue. He advised that the appeal had been dismissed and the application for costs had been refused. **NOTED**

- b) Members were advised of an opportunity to attend a Network event titled 'Planning a Community Led Renewable Energy Project' organised by Planning Aid Wales on 28th January from 2 – 4.30 pm. **NOTED:** No members are able to attend.
- c) Chair availed Members about a consultation issued by Welsh Government to amend existing fee levels for planning and related applications. It was noted that responses to the consultation are invited by 13 March 2020.
RESOLVED: To defer this correspondence until February meeting.

7.2. Reports

a) BCBC Plans for Conservation Work 2020 in Bridgend Town Centre (Cllr D Unwin)

- Chair presented a report for consideration by Members. He explained that BTC have not been made aware of any future BCBC initiatives or granting funding for Bridgend Town Centre conservation work and suggested that BTC write to the BCBC Planning and Conservation Departments to enquire if any conservation work is planned for 2020 and beyond.
- Chair highlighted concerns regarding the area at the bottom of Newcastle Hill and explained that several premises had fallen into disrepair in what is a designated a conservation area. He proposed engaging with BCBC regarding this particular problem.
- Cllr S Baldwin fully supported a letter being sent to BCBC and requested that plans for the whole town should also be considered.

RESOLVED: Town Clerk to write to BCBC to enquire about future maintenance of not only the buildings in the Town Centre Conservation area, but the town as a whole.

b) Engagement with HD Ltd on their current and future planning initiatives (Cllr D Unwin)

- Chair presented a report to Members outlining a positive approach to a future working relationship with a local private landlord in order to engage in positive discussions regarding future plans (both short and long term) for vacant properties in the town.
- Cllr S Baldwin proposed that there is an opportunity to change the approach and engage with BCBC to enquire what the local authority is doing to address the issue of vacant commercial properties. He raised concerns regarding transparency and individual relationships, which could be lost in the future. He suggested that BTC could put pressure on BCBC to liaise with private landlords to work towards bringing empty commercial properties back into use. He suggested that there is a need for realistic expectations regarding rents and rateable value of properties.
- Cllr T Wood noted that properties renovated by the private landlord had been completed to a very high standard but also commanded a high rent.

RESOLVED: Town Clerk to write to the Chief Executive of BCBC to enquire what plans are in place to deal with vacant commercial properties in Bridgend Town Centre in the short and long term.

c) Approaches to national businesses to consider and promote Bridgend Town as a location (Cllr D Unwin)

- Chair presented a report for consideration by Members. He expressed concern regarding the continued downturn of the use of premises in Adare Street and commented on the closure of Bon Marche, Monsoon and Accessorize and of two smaller businesses in

Wyndham Street. He highlighted the need for BTC to understand the way forward and stated that there were many opportunities in the town for national companies to occupy vacant premises.

- Chair suggested that BTC should write to selected national companies, to invite them to consider locating a branch in Bridgend. He highlighted that major fast food outlets could consider the larger properties that are now vacant.
- Cllr T Wood queried if this was the job of the BCBC Town Centre Manager. Cllr S Baldwin clarified that it was not within the Town Centre Managers role and explained that it would fall under the remit of the BCBC Economic Department.
- Town Clerk was asked to clarify if the Town Council could carry out this type of work.
- Town Clerk explained that under The Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015, Town and Community Councils in Wales have the power to do anything which they consider would be likely to improve the economic well-being of their area.
- Cllr S Baldwin suggested engaging with BCBC to highlight the concern about the loss of national chains and to discuss a joint initiative to address this issue.
- Members were unanimous in their concern about this issues and discussed consumer trends and the threat of further commercial losses in the town centre.
- The Mayor proposed that BTC should take the lead and keep BCBC informed.
- Members discussed how to attract national companies to Bridgend.
- Town Clerk advised Members that companies that are approached may request footfall figures which would need to be obtained from BCBC.
- Cllr S Baldwin proposed a 'meet the owners' event, facilitated by BCBC and BTC to identify opportunities to move forward.
- Cllr S Baldwin suggested identifying 3 – 5 empty properties to approach in the first instance. Members agreed that these would be:
 1. The Old Post Office/Old Whittinghams Building
 2. Dunraven Arms Hotel/Sapphires
 3. The York Hotel
 4. Cambrian house (Wyndham Street)
 5. Ranch Chip Shop and Welcome to Town Tavern (Nolton Street)
- Cllr R Marsh informed Members about a compulsory purchase scheme in the Borough of Neath Port Talbot. He explained that empty shops had been converted to residential homes and that it was a successful initiative that BCBC could possible replicate.
- Cllr R Marsh suggested that if a property had been vacant for 5 years this scheme BCBC could consider a compulsory purchase order. The Chair thanked Cllr Marsh and suggested that the legislation would be difficult and time consuming, but the committee should note for future reference.

RESOLVED: Town Clerk to make an initial contact with the BCBC Group Manager - Strategic Regeneration to explain BTC's proposal and report back at the next Planning Committee meeting.

Meeting closed at 12.15 pm.

Signed: (Chair of Planning Committee)

Date: