

Name of Committee:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	18/02/2019
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Environment and Regeneration
Report Title:	Barry Town Centre Summit
Purpose of Report:	To report on the outcome of the discussions at the Barry Town Centre Summit held on the 13th November 2018
Report Owner:	Councillor Jonathan Bird, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning
Responsible Officer:	Rob Thomas, Managing Director
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Operational Manager, Accountancy Legal (Committee reports) Ward Members for Barry Town Centre, Cllrs Griffiths, Johnson, Collins and Drake. Marcus Goldsworthy, Head of Regeneration and Planning Bob Guy, Operational Manager Regeneration Christopher Edwards, Town Centre Development Officer
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>This report sets out the challenges and issues facing Barry town centre as discussed at the recent Barry Town Centre Summit held in November 2018, in light of the challenges facing High Streets throughout the UK.</p> <p>The Summit, set up in partnership with Barry Town Council, was held to address many of the issues currently affecting Holton Road, in particular given the recent closures of a number of large national stores.</p> <p>The Summit was attended by representatives from across the business community in Barry Town Centre, Councillors from The Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town Council, Officers from the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town Council, The Police, The Mosaic Partnership (consultants) and landlords (a full list of attendees is included in the attached report).</p> <p>The summit format was based on workshops to identify and discuss opportunities to improve the viability of the town centre. A full report is attached as Appendix 1.</p>	

1. Recommendation

- 1.1** That Cabinet notes the record of proceedings attached and notes the progress that has already been delivered since the summit.
- 1.2** That the Report is forwarded to the Scrutiny Committee (Environment and Regeneration) for consideration.
- 1.3** That subject to consideration by Scrutiny Committee (Environment and Regeneration), preparatory work commences on scoping a replacement for the Town Centre Framework for Barry which seeks to link regeneration and investment opportunities, including the role of the town centre.
- 1.4** That a further report be presented to Cabinet in due course to set out progress on scoping work linked to a replacement for the Town Centre Framework.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1** To apprise Cabinet of the key themes emerging from the summit.
- 2.2** To advise Scrutiny Committee of the key themes and issues arising out of the November Summit and to inform possible future actions.
- 2.3** To ensure an up-to-date strategy for Barry in light of the changing demands and challenges for town centres.
- 2.4** To keep Cabinet apprised of progress.

3. Background

- 3.1** The economic health of Barry town centre has come under close scrutiny over the last year with high profile closures on Holton Road including Dorothy Perkins, New Look and Sports Direct stores. The Vale of Glamorgan and Barry Town Councils held a joint town centre summit in November last year to stimulate discussion on the issues and challenges facing Barry Town Centre and to identify potential priority initiatives to help support the Town.

4. Key Issues for Consideration

- 4.1** Footfall data (pedestrian flows) for Barry Town Centre over the last 52 weeks are 6.7% down on the previous year. Vacancy rates for shops have compared well with other Welsh and U.K. town centres over the last 10 years, but a recent spate of high profile closures is suggesting an emerging issue
- 4.2** The summit focussed on key themes emerging from workshops (see attached Report of Proceedings at Appendix 1 which outlines the key themes and how to develop each of the themes). Workshops were asked to identify firstly what was working well in the town centre, and then to identify priority initiatives to improve the centre. In respect of what is working well, three out of four of the workshops felt that retaining free parking was important. The fourth workshop reported that the programme of events attracts visitors and raises the profile of the centre, and there was general agreement that this could be further

enhanced. Appendix 1 also sums up the key themes emerging from the Summit it also identifies some short term possible actions.

- 4.3** Although town centres are seen as a highly prominent indicator of the state of the local economy, the Council's ability to create prosperous town centres is limited for two obvious reasons:
- i) Forces beyond its control: out-of-town or out-of-centre superstores have grown in accordance with national planning policy; internet shopping is growing dramatically and personal disposable income has stagnated.
 - ii) Lettings and vacancies are determined by the commercial property market, which reflects the interaction between the expectations of landlords and potential occupiers and over which the Council has little influence.
- 4.4** In respect of liaison with businesses generally, currently, this Council coordinates the Barry Town Centre Forum and the Holton Road Traders Group, to focus the views of town centre businesses and to act as a point of contact with the Council. Barry Town Council coordinates the Shop Local Campaign which has supported several initiatives in the town centre. The Holton Road Traders' Group is playing an active role in developing initiatives to assist in revitalising the town in partnership with both the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town Council. These initiatives have resulted in a programme of town centre events, floral displays and Christmas trees for individual shopkeepers which have improved the attractiveness of the town particularly in the run up to key trading periods such as Christmas.
- 4.5** The Barry Town Centre Forum and Barry Town Council's 'Shop Local Campaign' has helped to improve partnership working in the town centre delivering tangible benefits for the local businesses. Although successful in a liaison role, the potential for fuller business engagement remains. As a consequence the Council has secured funding from the Welsh Government to explore the potential of establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) for Barry. Later last year, two town centre events, namely the Halloween event and Christmas event were delivered in partnership with the traders and Barry Town Council. There will shortly be a detailed report to Cabinet on the BID proposal if feasibility work currently reaching a conclusion suggests progressing.
- 4.6** Since the summit, Welsh Government has confirmed that it intends to provide a more generous Business Rates relief scheme. Further, the Police in partnership with the Safer Vale Partnership are considering establishing a Business Watch scheme similar to the existing Rural Watch scheme for the Vale which will be free of charge to businesses. This will be a targeted messaging service that allows the Safer Vale Partnership and the Police to inform the businesses and request information from the local businesses as to specific problems in the town centre. The Police and Safer Vale Partnership have also agreed to regularly attend the traders' meetings to provide an update on policing issues in the town centre to reinforce their commitment to reducing crime in the town centre.
- 4.7** Cabinet is aware that the Council has a Town Centres Framework which guides action by a range of stakeholders in respect of town centres. The current difficult

business environment and the findings of the summit suggest it is time to review the policy framework and consideration is currently being given to a new overarching strategy for Barry which brings together the town centre and wider economy in the context of emerging regeneration initiatives. A further report will be presented to Cabinet later in the year which will consider the best way forward reflecting best practice and thinking.

5. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 5.1 Involvement** - The involvement of traders and other stakeholders, including the Town Council, the police and landlords working with the Council, on initiatives such as events which are organised in partnership, is key to a vibrant town centre. This was the driving force behind the decision to hold the summit. In addition, Local ward members have been consulted. Appendix 2 is a response from Councillor Ian Johnson. In summary, Councillor Johnson expresses concern that the Council has no credible plans for the town centre, and that the response to on-going issues such as vacancy rates has been 'sluggish'. In addition he suggests that the Town Centres Framework is no longer fit for purpose and that there is an over-reliance on the BID proposal and car parking charging. He has made several suggestions as recommendations, including calling for an immediate announcement that there will be no town centre car park charges and more proactive work with traders and landlords.
- 5.2** In response, Cabinet will note the recommendation relating to the town centre framework and the report itself acknowledges that there needs to be a new approach in relation to Barry. The issue relating to town centre car parking, albeit linked to this report is being progressed currently, and Cabinet will receive a report on the way forward on car parking in the near future. It would therefore be premature to deal with this issue in the sole context of this report. Commentary relating to the way which the Council liaises with landlords and traders is noted, and this is an approach that this Council already adopts, albeit in the context that there are several external influences which are clearly out of the control of the Council, which themselves should not be underplayed, that impact on the viability of town centres.
- 5.3 Collaboration** - Collaboration with Barry Town Council, local businesses and other stakeholders is critical when analysing information and developing solutions to problems and new policies in relation to the town centre.
- 5.4 Integration** - Solutions to town centre issues such as identified through the Summit involve multiple departments of the Council, the Town Council and traders working together.
- 5.5 Prevention** - The report looks at emerging issues and suggests interventions to prevent decline in the town centre retail environment.
- 5.6 Long Term** - The Summit sought to ensure the long term viability of the town centre.

6. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 6.1** There are resource implications arising from this report, and these relate to the need to continue to engage with and involve a wide range of partners in seeking to ensure a viable and vibrant town centre for Barry. In addition, there will be resource implications in terms of staffing when considering the next steps in progressing a new policy framework for the town to replace and supersede the Town Centres framework. This will be a matter that will be subject to a further report in due course.

Employment

- 6.2** There are no direct employment opportunities associated with this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

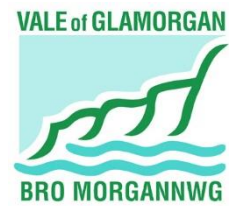
- 6.3** There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7. Background Papers

Report of Proceedings arising from the Barry Town Centre summit held on the 13/11/2018

Town Centres Framework

Barry Town Centre Summit held on the 13/11/2018



APPENDIX 1

The Dock Offices, Barry

Report of proceedings.

Background. High Streets throughout the UK are facing enormous challenges with major retail closures occurring on a daily basis resulting in an increase in vacant units as experienced by Barry Town Centre (Holton Road) with the recent closures of major retailers such as Dorothy Perkins, New Look & Sports Direct. The town centre trading landscape is changing at a fast pace. The last few years have been compared to the industrial revolution in retailing. Old ways of doing business are no longer as effective and new opportunities are emerging. One thing is clear; businesses working together have a much better chance of succeeding than trying to act alone.

As a consequence The Vale of Glamorgan and Barry Town Councils decided to hold the joint summit to help develop a more strategic partnership to overcome the challenges facing the town centre. The summit focussed on discussing and deciding key priorities to help revitalise the town.



Attendance – The summit was well attended by representatives from across the business community in Barry Town Centre, Councillors from The Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town Council, Officers from the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town Council, The Police, The Mosaic Partnership (consultants) and landlords (see list of attendees attached).

Format of the summit – The summit commenced with presentations by both the Managing Director of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Barry Town Council Town Clerk outlining the national and local position of struggling town centres throughout the UK and Barry Town Council's 'Shop Local Campaign' to encourage people to shop locally.

The attendees were then split into 4 groups and invited to consider the following:

A - 1 key positive aspect that already works in the town centre, and;

B - 3 priority initiatives/developments/changes which could be undertaken to improve the viability and attractiveness of the town.



Workshops

a) 1 x key positive that already works in the town centre.

Three of the workshops felt that free parking throughout the day is a key positive in the town whilst the fourth workshop felt that the regular programme of events on the square and in the park was a key positive for the town.

a.1 Free Parking throughout the day

- Going forward this would be dependent on the outcome of recent consultation on the Draft Parking Strategy and the business' attitude to establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) to help fund free parking.



a.2 Regular programme of events on King Square and in the park

- Opportunity to further build on the success of the recent programme of events held in both locations i.e. Christmas and Halloween events.
- The current event programme was considered to be strong but there are opportunities for all stakeholders to grow an annual programme of seasonal events to attract footfall and raise the profile of the town.

b) 3 x suggested initiatives/developments/changes

Across the 4 workshops, the following 9 points were identified:

b.1 Introduce 'Pop up Shops' to reduce vacancies and encourage innovative new businesses in the town

- Council to take out a long term lease on a vacant unit in the town centre for a minimum period of at least a year, in order to sub-lease the premises to new short term occupiers and carry the risk on their behalf.
- Establish a training programme to support and recruit new start-ups interested in occupying the units.

b.2 Councils to work with landlords to market vacant units

- It was felt there was a need to build a closer partnership with local landlords to understand the issues in attracting and retaining occupiers
- Establish a landlord forum to discuss these issues and consider ways to encourage potential occupiers to fill vacant units.
- Council to offer advice & guidance on Business rate relief, grants and initiatives available (commercial grants programme) to landlords and potential occupiers
- Hold a town centre promotional event to market the town and invite key retailers where certain deficiencies currently exist i.e. men's clothing. Need to ensure that the organisers are able to identify key vacant units (size, rent, building condition and business rates) and their owners. The event could be undertaken in conjunction with the landlord forum.



b.3 Stronger Police presence required in the town centre

- Some concern that there was limited police presence and an increase in crime/antisocial behaviour.

- Reduce anti-social behaviour, shop theft and alcohol and drug abuse.
- Establish a crime business partnership for Barry with representatives from the Police, Safer Vale Partnership, VOG & Town Council and the business community to address these issues.

b.4 Clear identifiable branding required for the town centre

- Re-brand the town based on its strengths of good value for money and strong mix of multiples and independents

b.5 Greater collaboration required between the business communities in the town centre

- Need to build upon the existing partnership working to develop stronger more inclusive partnerships which includes multiples, independents, banks and building societies and the service sector i.e. accountants and solicitors
- Establish a Business Improvement District (BID) for the town in conjunction with the Mosaic Partnership; the consultants recently appointed through Welsh Government and VOG funding to undertake a feasibility study into the benefits of a BID for Barry
- Holton Road Traders Group to hold a meeting early in the New Year to recruit new members to strengthen its existing activities and to ensure a more collective voice for the town when liaising with the Councils. Greater input from the multiples and the service sector required



b.6 Lobby Welsh Government to offer incentives to start-up/smaller businesses for business rates

- Need to encourage Welsh Government to review the current system of Business Rates and the existing incentives available to encourage new innovative businesses to replace older traditional retailers who are currently vacating town centres
- Council to liaise with other LA's through the Cardiff City Region (CCR) and other partnerships to suggest innovative solutions to incentivising new and smaller businesses to establish businesses in the town centre



b.7 'Sense of Place' should focus heavily on creating a unique identity for the town centre (recognise that the identity of the town centre could change dramatically)

The 'Sense of Place' officer has recently been appointed and is currently reviewing all current initiatives and studies to create a unique identity for Barry. Their role will include:

- Establishment of a Place board for delivery of the projects
- Creation of a storybook of Barry to highlight its former historical role
- Build Social Capital by encouraging local volunteer groups to relay the key messages to the town's community. In addition, to digital Place Marketing

b.8 Encourage the new Cardiff City Region and Transport for Wales to invest in the town's train station and links.

- Work closely with the City Region, Transport for Wales and Keolis to identify key deliverable projects to improve the accessibility of the town centre in order to help create a more viable town centre.
- Identify current shortcomings and outline potential improvements to the existing train stations and links



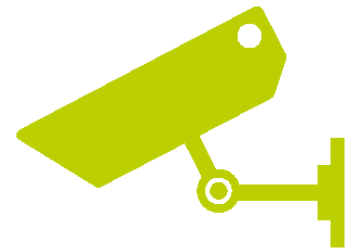
b.9 Discussion about anti-social behaviour in the town

Following the conclusion of the workshops a general debate prevailed regarding concerns about perceived high levels of anti-social behaviour in the town. Several businesses outlined incidences of drug and alcohol related incidents in the town which were affecting the confidence of the businesses community in the Police and the CCTV system

The retailers were concerned about the effectiveness and coverage of the CCTV system particularly since it has been relocated to Bridgend. They felt that when the operators were located in Barry it was far more effective and acted as a real deterrent to crime. The Police Officers present confirmed that they had similar concerns about the system.

Other retailers raised concern about the lack of Police presence in the town which they felt was resulting in increased crime in the centre

The Police advised businesses to phone 101 to report any crimes to raise the priority of incidents in the town centre. However, several businesses expressed a lack of confidence in phoning 101 due to the lengthy delays experienced when phoning.



All agreed that there was a greater need for more partnership working between the Police, Councils and local businesses.

Emerging Themes

A matrix of themes and possible actions from the summit is included at the end of the report.

Potential Business Improvement District (BID) for Barry

Owen Davies (Mosaic Partnership) outlined the process of the feasibility study to examine the benefits of a Business Improvement District (BID) for Barry.

The feasibility study will independently gather the evidence around the key issues and ideas for Holton Road before evaluating whether a BID is the right way forward for the area. The consultants are launching a business survey during November, which is an important part of understanding of the business concerns and priorities. The survey will be available online (using SurveyMonkey) and take a few minutes to complete the tick boxes.

Closure of the meeting

The meeting was closed by Councillor Jonathan Bird (Vale Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Planning) who thanked everyone for attending.

Key Themes emerging from The Barry Town Centre Summit

Key themes emerging from the summit	Possible Actions	Finance	Timescale	Responsibility
1. Car parking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional public parking created through permanent re-purposing of loading and taxi bays. 2. Consider the views of traders in finalising the Draft Parking Strategy 3. Include retention of an element of free parking in any proposals for parking in the town centre. 4. Ensure parking spaces are not blocked all day. 	VOG Council budget and possible Business Improvement District (BID) funds	<p>Council decision on Draft Parking Strategy due in 2018/19.</p> <p>If the businesses approve a BID and the BID agrees spending plans on this theme the funding is likely to be in place for 2020/21.</p>	VOG and local businesses
2. Events	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on the success of the recent programme of events held in both locations i.e. Christmas and Halloween events. 2. Coordinate an annual programme of seasonal events to attract footfall and raise the profile of the town. 	VOG Council, Barry Town Council funding, Businesses and potential BID funding. Also sponsorship and income opportunities.	Throughout the year	VOG , Barry Town Council and local businesses
3. Re-use of vacant units	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage innovative new businesses in the town centre which may mean allowing alternative uses to A1 retail along with shorter leases etc and temporary uses. 2. Build a closer partnership with local landlords to understand the issues in attracting and retaining occupiers. 3. Establish a landlord forum to discuss these issues and consider ways to encourage potential occupiers to fill vacant units. 4. Council to offer advice & guidance on NNDR (business rate) relief, grants available to landlords and potential occupiers. 5. Hold a town centre promotional event to market the town and invite key retailers where certain deficiencies currently exist i.e. men's clothing. Need to ensure that we are able to identify key vacant units (size, rent, condition and business rates) and their owners. The event could be undertaken in conjunction with the landlord forum. 	VoG and/or BID funding if approved.	Review to start asap. Others, 2019/20	VOG , Barry Town Council, Landlords and local businesses

Key Themes emerging from The Barry Town Centre Summit

4. Review/replace the Town Centres Framework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wholesale review to take place in parallel with actions identified. 	VOG	Immediate	Led by VOG but involving all stakeholders in the town centre.
5. Crime and antisocial behaviour.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Business Watch scheme for Barry with representatives from the Police, Safer Vale Partnership, VOG & Town Council and the business community to address these issues Encourage increased Police presence. 	VOG, Safer Vale Partnership funding or BID funding	2019/20	Police, Safer Vale Partnership, VOG Council, and local businesses
6. Collaboration between the town centre stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Need to build upon the existing partnership working to develop stronger more inclusive partnership which includes multiples, independents, banks and building societies and the service sector i.e. accountants and solicitors. Establish a Business Improvement District (BID) for the town in conjunction with the Mosaic Partnership the consultants recently appointed through Welsh Government and VOG funding to undertake a feasibility study into the benefits of a BID for Barry. Holton Road Traders Group to hold a meeting early in the Year to recruit new members to strengthen its existing activities and to ensure a more collective voice for the town when liaising with the Council. Greater input from the multiples and the service sector required. 	Welsh Government and VOG funding	2019/20	Local businesses, VOG
7. Incentives to start-up/smaller businesses for business rates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Welsh Government to review the current system of Business Rates and the existing incentives available to encourage new innovative businesses to replace older traditional retailers who are currently vacating town centres. Council to liaise with other LA's through the CCR Cardiff City Region and other partnerships to suggest innovative solutions to incentivising new and smaller businesses to establish businesses in the town centre. 	Nil Finance required	Ongoing	VOG and Barry Town Council

Key Themes emerging from The Barry Town Centre Summit

<p>8. Branding</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a Place board for delivery of the Sense of Place project. 2. Create a storybook of Barry to highlights its former historical role. 3. Build Social Capital by encouraging local volunteer groups to relay the key messages to the town's community. In addition, to digital Place Marketing. 	<p>HLF, VOG, Barry Town Council</p>	<p>2018-2020</p>	<p>VOG and Barry Town Council and the local community.</p>
<p>9. Transport</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage the development of an integrated transport interchange for both rail and bus. 2. Work closely with the City Region, Transport for Wales and WG to identify key deliverable projects to improve the accessibility of the town centre. 	<p>Welsh Government and City Region funding.</p>	<p>2018/19-21</p>	<p>VOG Council in partnership with Welsh Government , City Region, Transport for Wales and Keolis</p>

Cabinet Report consultation: Barry Town Centre Summit

As councillors for Barry Town Centre, Cllr Collins and myself attended and participated in the Barry Town Centre Summit, held at the Dock Offices on 13th November 2018. I also participated in the debate on Town Centre Frameworks held at the Council's Environment and Regeneration Committee in January 2019

I remain concerned that the Vale Council has no credible plans for the improvement of Barry Town Centre and believe that the council provided a limited and sluggish response to the marked increase in the number of vacant units on Holton Road during 2018.

This report, which will arrive at Cabinet nearly three months after the Summit took place, offers little information about future direction for council policy and action. The town centre framework was designed in 2012 and adopted in February 2014, five years ago. We have long reached a point where this is not fit for purpose, yet the process for developing a replacement is unclear.

The over-reliance upon the success of the BID proposal and the continued limbo regarding town centre car park charging – overwhelmingly opposed by traders at the Summit - suggest a lack of creative thinking.

The council's role is to work with all stakeholders, and the Summit was a small step in that direction. However, it seems from the tone of the report that the council didn't like what those stakeholders told them. The council must now show good faith in listening and acting upon the comments received at the Summit and co-ordinating next steps.

For clarity, my recommendations would be:

1. An immediate announcement confirming that there will be no town centre car parking charges in Barry. This would remove the element of doubt and show council support for Barry town centre.
2. Improvements in landlord liaison and dialogue, so that the council has a better understanding of why properties have become vacant and for how long this is likely to be the case. This will also assist in better town centre management and planning for the area.
3. Linked with the above, a more pro-active stance and improved understanding of town centre businesses, so that potential for business loss can be avoided where possible, future proofing the area by understanding issues regarding rents, leases, footfall etc. being faced by traders, as well as opportunities that can be promoted to those with a potential retail interest.

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