

Board Meeting 43

Wednesday, 3rd December

4:30pm, Aberafan Shopping Centre management meeting room

Attendees

Richard Jones, Selections Gift Shop (RJ)

Melanie Cole, Barista's (MC)

Tia Dowding, Wetherspoon (TD)

Julia Harries, Aberafan Shopping Centre (JH)

Sally Jones, Resident (SJ)

Mandy Jenkins, The means (MJ)

Jade Evans, The means (JE)

Item	Detail	Action
1.0	<p>Welcome and apologies</p> <p>RJ welcomed everyone to the meeting at 16:39.</p>	
2.0	<p>Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising</p> <p>2.1. Confirmation of minutes</p> <p>Those present agreed the minutes were a true reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>2.2. Matters arising</p> <p>No matters arising.</p>	
3.0	<p>The Business Community @ Glan Afan update</p> <p>RJ updated that the Glan Afan Coffee Co signed the building lease and took over tenancy from 16th November – delays due to solicitor holdup. The electric contract is currently still under VPT as a copy of the lease is required for changeover and this has not yet been sent by the GACC solicitor. VPT has also paid for waste collection and sanitary waste, however RJ hopes GACC will sort repayments for these by end of year. Damian has now started paying rent to GACC instead of VPT.</p> <p>3.1. Rent</p> <p>The board agreed to wait to discuss and agree rent for the VPT office space at the next meeting when bills have been sorted.</p>	
4.0	<p>Programme</p> <p>4.1. Christmas Parade</p> <p>RJ said there was mixed feedback from businesses – there was high footfall but low spend. Feedback from Forge Road wasn't very positive, with one business saying the market made no impact for them. More mixed feedback from Station Road businesses: people went into shops</p>	

but didn't buy anything; Jenkins had a busy day but didn't sell as much as expected, and the street emptied out after the parade. Feedback from market traders was also mixed: one stallholder did well as it's the only Port Talbot event she does, and some stallholders complained due to a large queue for one stall. RJ noticed families attended the event but not shopping.

JH updated that the footfall figure in ASC on the day was 12,047. Grotto attendance on the event day was down 40% from last year – JH believes this is due to the weather, the lack of free parking, and the ongoing works in Civic Square. Some tenants said they had good footfall, others said it was a normal Saturday; JH said that ASC understands that footfall can be encouraged but spend can't be guaranteed. Some tenants weren't aware of the Grotto launch day/the parade; others were also unaware of the national bus strike and didn't realise that's why some weekdays had been quiet. Feedback from ASC social media included comments saying it was worst Port Talbot Christmas event in years. JH had defended it stating outside factors hadn't worked in favour of the event this year.

RJ suggested scrapping the parade element of the event for next year and replacing it with general festive activities throughout the town to increase dwell time and potentially encourage more spend. RJ also suggested charging three different price points for stalls: the highest inside ASC, a middling price for Station Road, and the lowest price for Forge Road.

RJ expressed concern regarding the ASC Grotto figures. MJ explained the decrease likely looks more drastic as all elements of the Christmas event were inside ASC last year which drew extra footfall, creating a disproportionate comparison.

4.2. Parking posters

JH explained that the free car parking initiative in the run up to Christmas is important for ASC. ASC management had discussed this with the town centre manager in a recent meeting.

RJ updated the board that NPTC is offering free car parking in Station Road car park on Small Business Saturday (6th December). Businesses had received posters from the council. RJ expressed concern that many people confuse the car park names and may receive fines for failing to pay for parking in Bethany Square car park on the day. JH asked if VPT or any businesses had been consulted on the choice of car park; RJ and MJ confirmed they hadn't.

The five free parking dates have been announced as Wednesday 17th through to Sunday 21st December. MJ asked TD if Wetherspoon

	<p>would've voted for those dates, TD said it was doubtful as Wetherspoon is not taking part in the designated driver scheme this year. JH explained that the town centre manager had said that head offices would've received notice of parking survey, and JH had said wasn't acceptable.</p> <p>MJ asked the board if VPT should make posters to advertise the free parking offering as in previous years. The board agreed not to make posters – JE to share council post instead and turn off comments.</p> <p>The board discussed the Christmas Parade again. MJ said can't compete to the parade of 30 years ago. JH updated that the South Wales Evening Post had featured the ASC press release regarding the event. MJ asked why NPTC had been thanked in press release as this gave the impression that it was a council event; JH explained this was to maintain diplomacy. MJ requested that this is not done in future.</p> <p>MJ updated the board that the upcoming Local Growth Fund will be split 80% capital and 20% revenue, which will see less grant money available for events.</p> <p>The board discussed issues with obtaining grant funding this year.</p> <p>JH discussed issues in the multistorey.</p> <p>RJ asked TD if Wetherspoon had been busy on the Christmas Parade day, TD explained that it had been and that head office had created flyers to give out at the event, however staff had been so busy that few were distributed.</p> <p>A BID levy payer on Station Road had complained about the event as it hadn't affected the bottom end of the street. RJ has attempted to visit her to discuss.</p> <p>RJ mentioned having seen two local reindeer parades recently and suggested booking reindeer for next year's event if there is a parade. MJ said this could be looked into; JE explained that VPT might get animal rights complaints.</p> <p>The board agree to discuss the 2026 Christmas even later next year to agree on a plan.</p>	
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Marketing</p> <p>JE updated the board with the following figures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook: 6715 followers up to 6784 (+69) • Instagram: 1276 followers up to 1285 (+9) <p>MJ updated the board that her and JE had spent the day filming a Merry Christmas video from the town centre. ASC and Forge Road had been covered, but another day of filming is needed to finish shooting on</p>	

	<p>Station Road. MJ explained that businesses that aren't levy payers are also being invited to feature in the video for a whole town centre feel. MJ and JE anticipate lots of engagement on the video when it is posted.</p> <p>RJ noticed that the Christmas Parade video had not received many comments. TD said she had seen people comment on it in Facebook groups or privately on their own page.</p> <p>SJ brought in a copy of the council's candy cane trail. The town centre manager had discussed with ASC regarding their businesses' participation. JH noted that NPTC had booked a visit from Santa in the library on the 29th November without asking ASC permission – this had resulted in two Santas in ASC at once, which ASC has complained to the council about.</p>	
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>6.1. Income Report</p> <p>6.1.1. Expenditure Report</p> <p>£24,522.78 in the Viva Port Talbot bank account. Only one outstanding invoice from the Christmas Parade to be paid.</p> <p>JH asked how much the Christmas Parade cost; JE said the event budget was £8,000, with an additional £500 set aside as contingency. The final cost is yet to be calculated. MJ explained that the parade has grown over the years, however the number of meet and greet characters was cut back this year due to rising costs year-on-year.</p> <p>JH asked what the best event has been for VPT this year; MJ and JE said the food festival. RJ expressed wanting to focus less on external stallholders and more on town centre businesses for next year, and suggested running the loyalty card scheme for summer.</p>	
<p>7.0</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>The next Business Crime Partnership meeting is taking place at 7:30am on Friday 5th December, however neither RJ, MJ, or JE can make it.</p> <p>RJ asked JH if ASC will be doing events next year; JH said there will be a celebratory event to mark the 50th anniversary of the centre. RJ suggested that VPT contribute as it could benefit the whole of town; JH suggested a joint meeting to discuss. SJ offered to find historical info with Calon Afan for it.</p> <p>RJ explained that rateable values would be changing from 1st April 2026 to bring Wales in line with England's reevaluation timescale. While most of town centre's RVs have decreased, some may end up paying more in business rates as the current rates relief system will be scrapped. The</p>	

	BID levy will still be based on the 2023 ratings list as per regulations.	
8.0	Date of next meeting Wednesday, 14 th January, 4:30pm. Meeting concluded at 17:40.	