

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Date Written	18 <sup>th</sup> February 2020
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Service Area	Community Regeneration
Committee Date	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020

*To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen*

# **Continued Development of the Town Centre – Evening Economy**

## **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The report provides an update on progress made in relation to the development of the Evening Economy.
- 1.2 The report aims to make Scrutiny Members aware of the progress made in relation to the 'Merthyr After Dark' Strategy and the future actions which will be implemented to achieve the objectives of the report.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 The content of this report to be discussed and noted.

## **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Welsh Government produced 'A Framework for Managing the Night Time Economy in Wales' in 2017. Using ambitions laid out in the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015), the framework has shifted from a reactive focus, to a proactive and preventive approach to support prosperous and safe night-time economies in Wales.
- 3.2 In November 2017 a Scrutiny Report was provided on how MTCBC were aiming to address the challenges of developing the evening economy and addressing the three objectives of the national framework, which were:

- **Objective 1** - To support the development of a systematic approach to increase understanding of the night-time economy based on intelligence and accurate information.
  - **Objective 2** - To promote sustainable environments and support prevention strategies to create healthy, safe and diverse night-time economies in Wales.
  - **Objective 3** - To support effective multi-agency management of the night-time economy and enforcement at the local level.
- 3.3 The report also provided detail on three further actions undertaken in 2017 that have been outlined below.
- 3.4 The Town Centre Partnership produced a short-term action plan under the theme of a Safe, Secure and Attractive Town Centre (2017). A task and finish group was formed to develop relationships with key partners, identify medium and longer term issues; and gather momentum with quick wins.
- 3.4 In partnership with the Business Improvement District, a Perception Survey was undertaken of the Town Centre by independent consultants Storecheckers. This resulted in the commencement of street by street audits and actions. Glebeland Street was the first priority area. Improvements included removing planters, cleaning and painting of the public realm; targeted grant assistance as well as visits to licensed premises on a monthly basis.
- 3.5 The challenges around homelessness were highlighted in a report to this Scrutiny Committee on the 24th October 2017. Issues identified for this included highlighting the issue of homelessness and reference the night shelter, the visible homeless (particularly in Town Centre); licensing, public protection issues (violent crime).

## 4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 Following the Town Centre Partnerships' Safe, Secure and Attractive working group, an Evening Economy Board superseded this group and developed 'Merthyr After Dark' an overarching strategic plan. This sets out a clear vision for the evening and night-time economy, key objectives and key performance indicators. Sat underneath this is the annual Action Plan that highlights the key projects, responsible organisations and timescales that will achieve the objectives and ultimately the vision.
- 4.2 The ambition of the Authority was to work towards Purple Flag status that provides national accreditation and recognition for a varied and safe night-time economy similar to the standards set for parks with green flags and beaches with blue flags.
- 4.3 The three objectives of the Merthyr After Dark strategy are:
- Wellbeing: a welcoming, clean and safe town centre;
  - Movement: a secure pattern of arrival circulation and departure; and
  - Appeal: a vibrant choice and rich mix of entertainment and activity.

- 4.4 The Evening Economy will be a strong component to align with the new Town Centre Masterplan and will assist in guiding new developments within the evening economy and diversifying the economic base. Consideration will also be given to the relationship with Merthyr Leisure Village. The Masterplan will also enable us to develop the evening economy as part of the Town Centre Partnership vision of being the regional destination for shopping, business and leisure.

## **5. WHERE WE ARE NOW**

- 5.1 Operation Protect. A number of town centre operations haven taken place with formal action taken on unlicensed and overcharging taxis, action plans and reviews on licensed premises operating not in accordance with Licensing Objectives.
- 5.2 A new footprint and camera stock review has been adopted with new, modern, town centre cameras being put in place. The ongoing efficiency agenda has however led to proposed efficiencies on manned coverage of cameras with us moving to an unmanned CCTV provision. This will have a negative consequence for us in policing the night-time economy.
- 5.3 Data and Intelligence – Localised joint working with South Wales Police has continued to be a key aspect in our delivery of effective preventative and investigative techniques. We have been affected with loss of data from a scaling back of a project undertaken with the Police and Crime Commissioner on pooling violence data from hospitals that allowed us to access data on non-police reported violent crime.
- 5.4 Since the last Scrutiny Report the Head of Public Protection and Housing post was subject to a voluntary redundancy. A rejig of services has led to the Operational manger taking on more strategic work along with line management of additional services. This has affected capacity within the teams to deliver on actions from a Protection and Safety Services perspective.
- 5.5 Again, since the last Scrutiny Report the Town Centre Manager that was leading on the Evening Economy Agenda left the authority. The Strategic Regeneration Team has incorporated the Town Centre management function within the service area and the wider work programme therefore existing priorities have prevented progression with the Strategy. The re-establishment of the Board has become a priority for the next financial year.
- 5.6 A Town Centre Support Officer role has been created which provides a first point of contact for Town Centre businesses and users. Any issues identified that impact on the Town and the evening economy will be highlighted to the Officer who would identify and co-ordinate a mitigation through engagement with relevant internal or external stakeholders.
- 5.7 Continued support is provided to local businesses to ensure venues are well managed to meet varied tastes and deliver vibrant, successful late night offers.

## **6. WHERE WE WANT TO BE**

- 6.1 The draft 'Merthyr After Dark' Strategy's current vision is "The Evening and Night-Time Economy will enhance Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, helping to create a stimulating destination providing a safe, secure environment, with a vibrant choice and rich mix of entertainment and activity for all". The role of the Board will be to work towards achieving this through the delivery of key actions.
- 6.2 That Merthyr Tydfil is nationally recognised as a safe, secure environment with a rich mix of entertainment and activity for all by securing Purple Flag recognition.
- 6.3 Continuation of our proactive Operations to police the night-time economy.
- 6.4 A new modern CCTV infrastructure meeting best practice needs.
- 6.5 Access to latest intelligence to ensure we can react to emerging issues in a timely effective manner.
- 6.6 To have in place a resilient enforcement service.

## **7. WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT**

- 7.1 Review the 2019 draft 'Merthyr After Dark Strategy' as the strategic vision and objective for the evening economy for the next three years to ensure it remains fit for purpose and to update the performance indicators and Action Plan to reflect the future work of the Board.
- 7.2 Re-establish the Evening Economy Board and continue to work in partnership with our key delivery partners. A review of membership is imperative to ensure the right representation is targeted to support and review delivery of the Action Plan.
- 7.3 Continue to diversify our economy; the Regeneration Department will continue to develop opportunities to attract restaurants, music venues and other entertainment options to locate in the town centre. Ensuring there is a range of entertainment will provide a choice of different entertainment and cultural activities will broaden the demographics of town centre visitors.
- 7.4 Continue to work with the Community Safety partners and deliver the current action plan to reduce alcohol-related crime and injury.
- 7.5 Nominate an Evening Economy Champion to ensure the work of the Board is recognised and act as an ambassador for the town when meeting with potential investors.
- 7.6 Continue review of CCTV provision and seek funding opportunities through collaboration.
- 7.7 Through the Cwm Taf Community Safety Board raise the concerns over lack of intelligence products on Violent Crime from the PCC project.
- 7.8 Review resilience through the Corporate Capacity workstream.

## 8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

8.1 The work that has and will continue to be undertaken in relation to the development and delivery of the Evening Economy will support outputs under two of the themes contained within the Merthyr Tydfil Corporate Wellbeing Plan:

**Living Well** (People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health); and

**Working Life** (People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure which makes Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination).

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**PORTFOLIO MEMBER FOR**  
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**PROTECTION**

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		<b>No</b>