

ABERGAVENTNY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 23RD FEBRUARY 2022 7PM VIA MS TEAMS & IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM, TOWN HALL, ABERGAVENTNY.

Present: Cllr T Konieczny (Chair)
Cllr N Tatam
Cllr M Harris
Cllr R Harris
Cllr T Davies
Cllr G Jones
Cllr S Burch

Absent without apologies

Cllr L Van De Vyver, Cllr D Simcock

In attendance:

S Rosser (Town Clerk)

No public session.

Public in attendance: Chris Were

E 15/22	Receive and approve apologies for absence Apologies were received from Cllr M A Brocklesby and it was resolved to accept the reasons for absence.
E 16/22	Receive Declarations of Interest Cllr R Harris – Takes no part in consideration or discussion of planning applications as sits on MCC Planning Committee. Cllr T Davies – declared an interest in the Friends of Bailey Park presentation and application as sits on their committee. Cllr N Tatam – declared an interest in planning application DM2021/01595 as this is a neighbour.
E 17/22	To receive and approve the minutes from the last meeting on 26th January 2022. Cllr Jones moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Cllr Burch. Minutes approved by all councillors present, and signed by Cllr Konieczny.
E 18/22	To receive a presentation from Friends of Bailey Park. A multi-year funding request for £1500 per year for 3 years has been received from Friends of Bailey Park. Their presentation and evidence was circulated prior to the meeting for councillors to read through. Cllr Konieczny expressed

	<p>there was a great deal of detail on what they will do, and ATC’s strategy and action plan states a multi-year funding agreement is desirable. As a volunteer group, they find it difficult to put in actions to improve ATC’s objectives for Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Section 6 of the Environment Act. In general, he agrees with this in principle. The report is the basis for the cooperative agreement, we need to look at what the objectives are that we want them to achieve as well as maintaining the beds which they do so well. Cllr M Harris considered that what they are asking for is very modest, and it has been difficult to keep up with what the group have taken on. Happy to give a 3-year rolling programme with an annual update, as detailed a report as provided here would be sufficient. They have created a delightful area that is and will be well used, the transformation is amazing – keep up the good work. Cllr Konieczny reminded ATC it’s not about them engaging in new projects but that current ones embrace introduction of pollinators, native species, and fulfil plans for the wild meadow. Need to clarify if these are objectives we can support. Our own planting schemes around town have received high praise and use species that meet this requirement. Need to engage groups to take up the eco-literacy training to increase biodiversity. In principle Cllr Konieczny agrees with supporting this, ATC need to assist in creating an agreement, not just receive this report. We need to form the deliverables, then it will be acceptable. We need to ask them to assist in delivering Section 6. Cllr Konieczny asked councillors if they are happy to accept this proposal in principle. Proposed by Cllr Jones, seconded by Cllr Burch, all councillors accept and approve this proposal.</p>
<p>E 19/22</p>	<p>To consider and make recommendations regarding the following planning applications:</p> <p>DM/2022/00049: Retrospective application – already in place. Reasonable solution for difficult access problem. Recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2022/00133: A fairly inobtrusive installation, in corner of the window, to allow people to access prescriptions out of hours. A welcome addition to facilities. Recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2021/01595: Development of 10 flats in total. Cllr Jones had not received any comments himself from residents, but has spoken to Baileys who have bought the site. Old railway barracks, small flat development similar to others nearby. Parking may be a concern. Cllr Burch supports the provision of flats and bringing the building back in to use. She recognises the neighbours comment on a 3 storey development being obtrusive. Concerns over junction with the garage and vets – already a difficult place to pull out of. Cllr Konieczny said all the new flat developments are a welcome addition to Abergavenny to offer affordable accommodation in the town. Concerned about room sizes as they are very small. Cllr Jones stated there is no minimum size currently under Welsh Planning, just guidelines. Overall, generally accepting of the proposal, but will raise concerns over the parking, pedestrian access and infrastructure. Recommend approval.</p>

DM/2021/02014: Cllr Davies said this was a sensible improvement to make on this property. Recommend approval.

DM/2022/00212: When the pre-application consultation (PAC) was received, ATC felt at that we didn't have enough time to read the full document pack, and this was set over the Christmas Period. Reading the comments this was a universal response from other consultees, with the response to this being quoted as being within statutory guidelines and time frames which have to be offered. ATC said they would offer comments on the application at this stage. Again when you look at it there are 102 documents, which are difficult to read and understand. Cllr Konieczny has read the 92 page PAC and can see things that were raised by the community and other respondents have been brushed aside. The cut-off for responding is early March. Cllr Konieczny asked if councillors felt it was worthy of calling an Extraordinary Full Council Meeting and inviting MCC officers involved in the redevelopment to discuss the application. The general design is very uninspiring, as it is supposed to be a centre of excellence, and they have not paid due process to create a net zero carbon or energy saving build. No regard for Passivhaus Principles – none of these have been adequately addressed. This is a huge, missed opportunity. Cllr Jones compared the visit to Beaupreau in France when they toured the ultra-modern school which had these inspiring features. The King Henry School development is one of the biggest investments Abergavenny will have, and there is not enough adequate information for us to scrutinise this properly. Cllr Burch agrees with this, and after setting aside half a day to go through all the documents, was disappointed that you can't even read the labelling on these plans. In conclusion the proposal is ugly, the massing is wrong, it is not a building for small children, access for those with pushchairs crosses the path of the bus lane, materials are unsympathetic, and it is generally a poor design. The town deserves better – we need to speak to the Project Manager and get a proper look at the plans.

Cllr Davies stated that here was an opportunity to have a wonderful place of learning, and how disappointing it is for those involved early on that haven't been listened to. We should reject these plans, and we should get someone to come and talk to us about them. For future generations, this is appalling.

Cllr Tatam agreed and didn't see the point of getting an officer to attend. This will have been a decision from the top. When you read the submissions for professional people – some of whom are architects – their comments are blistering and none have been taken into account. The Design Commission for Wales were not consulted and their comments were ignored.

Cllr Konieczny said that Cath Saunders from MCC is the programme manager, so is the principle officer on this. It would be interesting to know Welsh Government's take on this as they are funding 60% of this, how they feel this meets their sustainability requirements. If we want to get children to respond to the Climate Crisis, we need a building that does this. Children should have something exciting and inspiring. Its surprising a development of this size and importance was not put to the Design Council for Wales. On behalf of the people in this town we should be pushing for a centre of excellence.

Cllr Jones suggested we write to the Minister of Education at the Senedd about the pre-app, the nursery provision, the unreadable plans, and ask for comment if this is acceptable.

	<p>Cllr M Harris fully supports a special meeting with Cath Saunders from MCC. All of us are raising questions. Cllrs M Harris and MA Brocklesby responded to the pre-app with reservations on the design. We should have one meeting with MCC officers to discuss this, before the planning deadline.</p> <p>Cllr R Harris raised a point of information; Cllr Paul Pavia is the Chair for 21st Century Schools, so he should also be invited along with Cath Saunders.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny asked if we are happy to call Full Council and relevant officers to an Extraordinary Meeting regarding planning issues and queries before we make or decision on recommendations. All in favour of this approach.</p> <p>DM/2021/02011: Already approved change of use on this previously, recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2022/00105: Older building that is no longer fit for purpose. Recommend approval of demolition.</p>
E 20/22	<p>To consider and comment on the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Notice and Letter for Nevill Hall Hospital Satellite Radiotherapy Unit (SRU).</p> <p>We noted at the last meeting we would ask all councillors to look at the plans in order to give meaningful comment to formulate our response. Cllr Konieczny would like to say it is a model of best practice – architects have adopted the passive house principle – fabric first to energy conservation. Built to the highest level to reduce energy use and control the environment within. The PAC talks about how this works as part of a decarbonisation strategy. The level of detail and the fact they’ve concisely identified on p32 of the Design and Access Statement the constraints of the site, the mixed levels, mature trees on site, flood risk on part of the land, how to link the new building to the existing hospital, clinical design, increased provision on an existing site. It talks about the opportunities like access to green infrastructure, new spaces outside, linking to green routes into town, views of the Bloreng, etc. Given the detail, from the pre-app side it is an exemplar of good practice, and is incredibly well done. This will benefit Monmouthshire, Powys, and the wider Gwent area, giving treatment locally, so patients don’t have to travel so far.</p> <p>Cllr Tatam stated that everything you hear about medicine is local diagnostics. The fact this follow the passive house principle is excellent. Previously Cllr Tatam raised an issue over the flat roof with photovoltaic panels giving no opportunity for natural light which would surely be beneficial to lift the spirits when in this environment.</p> <p>Cllr Jones finds this is a refreshing modern and comprehensive application – exactly what the pre-app process was designed to produce to benefit the wider community.</p> <p>Cllr M Harris asked councillors to keep in mind what the pre-app says they will do, and that we must ensure they stick to this. Cllr Harris hopes the future council will scrutinise all through the process so we don’t lose any features presented in this.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny asked if Councillors are happy to approve this pre-application and for us to pass comment. Cllr Tatam will write a response regarding the</p>

	<p>comments about the roofing to send to the Clerk to be included in our response. All councillors approved.</p>
E 21/22	<p>To receive and note an update from the Town Clerk.</p> <p>The Town Clerk's report was received and noted. Cllr Konieczny informed Councillors that the Green Infrastructure project for Castle Street Car park was likely to cost £26K which is far in excess of what we paid for the improvements in this area.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny has written to Ruth Edwards – Chair of MCC Planning Committee – and has still had no response nearly 3 months and has since found the answer to the query himself which has been shared with Councillors. Cllr Burch was disappointed that the Nature Isn't Neat project coordinators were looking at areas already managed well. Belgrave Park is very much missed out. She and Cllr D Simcock have asked to be kept informed of any works or developments there but has had nothing to date. Cllr Konieczny responded that this area is in fact a high priority and that officers are aware it is a contentious area. Cllr Burch also raised the grasslands on Old Barn Way at the Rother/Underhill Estate. Opportunities for management of grassland and street trees in this area.</p> <p>Dogs on leads – Cllr Burch wonders why there isn't an overarching dog management strategy with a clear expectation of where dogs can go? Cllr Konieczny explained that we considered signage but what was sent to us was for dog fouling, not dog control. Need to have better signage at all entrances at Bailey Park regardless. Dogs on Leads just isn't covered. We've been deflected by the ongoing works around a PSPO so we must allow that to run its course and then try again.</p>
E 22/22	<p>To receive an update from the Environment Committee Climate Crisis Policy sub-group.</p> <p>3 submissions have been received from members of the sub group for consideration. We need to try and create an overall statement with a Strategy and Action Plan which we can then influence and work on. Cllr M Harris asked if options 1 & 2 could marry up their planting points. What we plant now will benefit future generations in 30years time, its about putting actual plants in the ground.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny asked the Town Clerk to reconvene the sub group as soon as possible to edit these three options into a final draft document, which all councillors were in favour of. Cllr Konieczny thanked councillors for their submissions and suggestions.</p>
E 23/22	<p>To review the updated Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Belgrave Park has now been added to the plan. The Bus Station redevelopment has also been added and going forward the three year funding support agreement for Friends of Bailey park will also be included.</p> <p>Cllr Burch had sent in a suggestion for the approaches into town from either direction on the A40 to be improved and asked why we were unable to include this. Cllr Konieczny reiterated that these roads are under the control of the</p>

	<p>South Wales Trunk Road Agency (SWTRA) and all parties have huge difficulties dealing with this organisation, including MCC. Even Litter Picking is difficult to organise on this road. As stated previously, a group of residents who took it upon themselves to clear and maintain a verge were issued with a cease and desist order from SWTRA. We need to include things we can actually deliver. Previous clerk did make some inroads with SWTRA but it is hugely difficult – it’s a great suggestion, but we can’t enact or have influence on it. Very difficult and restrictive, unfortunate and sad. All agreed that the first impression from the A40 looks very uncared for. Even the route through town, with the signage as it is, gives a poor impression to the casual visitor. Updates were noted, and any further suggestions are to be emailed to Cllr Konieczny and Town Clerk.</p>
<p>E 24/22</p>	<p>Report from Councillors attendance at external bodies relevant to this Committee.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny’s report from attending the CCTV working group meeting on 7th February was noted. Cllr Konieczny also attended a second meeting on the 15th February which was attended by County Councillors Thomas, Woodhouse, Powell, and Pratt, MCC officers Nigel Leaworthy, Ivan Bassett, Andrew Mason, John Crandon, and Town Clerk Sandra Rosser. Two new cameras are going in at Frogmore/Lion Street junction, Lion/King/Market Street junction, and 4 in Bailey Park. 2 demountable cameras are also going to be deployed. Camera tech s being updated from analogue to digital, which has meant more equipment in the control room to process the additional data. The camera at the Bus Station is now operational. There is an ongoing review between County and Town Councillors plus the MCC officers, which is very productive. Ivan and his team are doing an incredible job maintaining the cleanliness of the town and taking down graffiti. Tree pruning will take place shortly to enable coverage of CCTV where growth now obscures cameras. Surveys show women in particular feel safer in areas with good lighting and CCTV.</p> <p>Cllr Jones asked about money form the PCC Jeff Cuthbert – was this for the two additional cameras? Cllr M Harris thanked Cllr Jones for flagging this, as they have been trying to secure the funds for some time, the Safer Streets money has enabled this. Cllr Harris would suggest an annual walk about as it flags simple things like the tree pruning and when lights are put up that then obscure the CCTV. Meetings have highlighted that coordination is crucial. SWTRA caused the bus station issue and have taken time to fix this. Other CCTV is being improved – don’t underestimate how useful this is for the town. It helps with all manner of issues – lost children, locating vulnerable people, etc. £14k cost is managed in the value to life.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny, on behalf of ATC, expressed our thanks to Cllr M Harris for her representation on the CTV Panel – the depth of knowledge and understanding has been invaluable -Thank You.</p>
<p>E 25/22</p>	<p>Report from County Councillors on matters affecting Abergavenny relevant to this Committee.</p>

	<p>Cllr R Harris reported that MCC will be discussing the council tax at their next meeting on 3rd March – good news is that there is likely to be a 2.95% rise form MCC, and looking at the figures for the rest of the TCC’s in Monmouthshire Abergavenny comes out best as opposed to everywhere else bar Monmouth. All others are levering higher than ATC, yet they are not doing anywhere near as much as ATC are doing. It’s a job well done and we are delivering more for the constituents. Cllr Konieczny thanked Cllr R Harris for this update and hopes residents will appreciate the efforts of creating a pro-active Council.</p>
E 26/22	<p>Items for consideration at the next meeting 30th March 2022.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny asked Councillors to email any suggestions for the next meeting to the Town Clerk.</p>

Meeting ended at 8:38pm.

APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD

CHAIRMAN DATE