

## ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 22<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2023 AT 7PM VIA MS TEAMS & IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM, TOWN HALL, ABERGAVENNY.

**Present:** Cllr T Konieczny (Chair)  
Cllr P Bowyer  
Cllr M Barnes  
Cllr K Eldridge  
Cllr J George  
Cllr C Holland  
Cllr G Jones  
Cllr D Simcock  
Cllr L Wright

#### **Absent without apologies**

None.

#### **In attendance:**

S Rosser (Town Clerk)  
J Clarke – Green Infrastructure Officer, MCC  
Z Morris and P Hovland – The Media Agency

#### **Public in attendance:**

A Fairey, G Smith, K Waters, I Vicary.

No public session.

E12/23	<b>Receive and approve apologies for absence.</b>  None received.
E13/23	<b>Receive Declarations of Interest</b>  None received.
E14/23	<b>To receive and approve the minutes from the last meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023.</b>  Cllr Holland proposed that Councillors accept the minutes of the last meeting as a true record, seconded by Cllr Simcock. All Councillors resolved to accept.
E15/23	<b>To elect a Vice Chair for the Environment Committee</b>  Cllr Konieczny explained we now had a vacancy for Vice Chair as Cllr Strong has resigned from ATC. The person would only need to sit for ¼ year until the AGM in May. Incumbent on ATC to vote for a new Vice Chair.

	<p>Cllr Jones nominated Cllr Holland and this was seconded by Cllr Bowyer. No other nominations were received. All Councillors voted to accept Cllr Holland's nomination as Vice Chair of Environment Committee.</p>
E16/23	<p><b>To receive a presentation from Jane Clarke – Green Infrastructure Officer MCC. (Green and Blue Corridors of Abergavenny and FIT Project).</b></p> <p>Cllr Konieczny welcomed J Clarke to the meeting. JC had spoken to the Civic Society about the Green and blue corridors of Abergavenny, and Cllr Konieczny felt that it would be good for ATC to see how we can protect and enhance these, and also look at the FIT programme.</p> <p>JC thanked ATC for the invite. The presentation explained that this is a nature based solution linking rich habitats to outskirt areas. Small gardens, street trees, neighbourhood areas, River Usk, and woodlands – all part of a robust connected ecosystem. Looking at enriching existing or creating new areas. Gwent Green Grid Partnership has a map of potential Green Corridors. Keen to ensure native species are encouraged in plantings or areas and habitats. Pilot project – Deri View School. Monitoring is as important. Citizen Science Project – on 28<sup>th</sup> April 12 people will undertake the FIT training.</p> <p>TK: Green Infrastructure Map – has this been shared with MCC Planning Dept as the RLDP candidate sites fall in some of the Green Corridors. Previous plan had commitment to create Green Wedges, none are included this time so ATC wondered if this is all joined up? JC will check with the officers to make sure of this.</p> <p>GJ: Belgrave Park plantings – are the new hedges and trees been planted all part of this project? JC – similar projects are running in parallel, so there are crossovers. This is to try and strategize it all. Community Nature Spaces. We are looking to design and consult this year. There will be lots of feed-in projects.</p> <p>TK: Strategy and Action Plan has a section on Environment, and TAC prioritises along with MCC to look to work together to improve areas. Can you regularly update us so we can feed into this and the wider community? JC – Positive collaboration – ATC are so pro-active on environment, will check but its very positive. TK: Request Town Clerk send you the S&amp;A plan as it currently stands, then maybe we can meet again to discuss this further?</p> <p>MB: We are looking to hold an Environment Fair to encourage engagement of the public, and we would like to see you there and to invite you to present at the event on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny thanked JC for the presentation and information, and we look forward to the FIT training on 28<sup>th</sup> April. This will helps us to be able to survey interventions to show if there has been a net increase in biodiversity – a real step forward.</p>
E17/23	<p><b>To receive a presentation from Zoe Morris and Pete Hovland from The Media Company on the Abergavenny In Bloom project</b></p> <p>Cllr Konieczny welcomed ZM and PH from The Media Agency, who had met with himself and the Town Clerk to go through some ideas as they wanted to assist in showcasing the Community and Town through Abergavenny In Bloom. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and You Tube can be used to maximise exposure, to look at the full scope of everything that goes on in the background, and the</p>

	<p>community can see everything that is going on around them and the town. The groups can email all pics and photos to be uploaded plus video content showcasing biodiversity, heritage, and the environment, to bring to life and help the award submission. We can capture what is being done and take it to the next level. ZM scripts this and PH films the content and this all creates a great presentation in the background. It shows the effort that goes into the 'finished article'. Short videos get the messages across, which gives maximum exposure. Sustainability – future generations can look at what you achieve. Link this to ATC website and create templates for any presentations and portfolios.</p> <p>GJ: Seen the videos on other platforms that they manage – they are very good. Are you offering this for free? ZM – as much as we can we will as our contribution to Abergavenny In Bloom, but some costs will need to be offset.</p> <p>PB: This is a very good idea, and we can reap the benefits of this and engage as much as we can.</p> <p>TK: Britain In Bloom is our starter project – we need to improve Community Engagement and this transfers to regular work on ATC website, to engage rather than just publishing our annual report. ZM &amp; PH fired up lots of ideas beyond AiB project and BiB.</p> <p>MB: It is good to be able to work with local businesses.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny thanked The Media Agency for their time and input.</p> <p>ZM &amp; PH left the meeting.</p> <p>TK: When setting a budget for AiB, we didn't know we'd be put forward for BiB. We can vire money for the BiB project. Incredibly lucky on what work ZM &amp; PH have already done so far pro bono but we can't expect it all for free. Needs a proper budget – proposes £5k.</p> <p>GJ: Proposal to take £5k from reserves – happy to second this. Put to all councillors – all resolved to accept this proposal.</p> <p>TK has spoken to PB to look at whether Media Agency can assist with website management as we have no community Officer to keep on top of this and social media channels, even if only for an year. PB explained that a comment on Facebook on usual complaints on what the Council did or didn't do, led to a response form Cllr Burch which led to an investigation of the website and its not up to scratch. We should be very open and it lets us down. We don't have enough staff. We can't keep asking more and more of the Town Clerk – we have long term aspirations but need something now. Would be worth looking at engaging the Media Agency to maintain and keep up to date our own website. Short term solution to ensure image of ATC is effective and up to date.</p> <p>MB: It's a three stage process – what work are we aiming to achieve? Who looks at the website? Check out and investigate what we want, how we do it, and when we do it. Lots can be spent on comms, but it can be ineffective.</p>
E18/23	<p><b>To receive and note an update from the Town Clerk</b></p> <p>Report was received and noted. MB offered to assist with the planter audit.</p>
E19/23	<p><b>To receive and note the Service Delivery update</b></p>

	<p>Report was received and noted.</p> <p>CH explained the lane gets very overgrown, MCC have cut it annually. Road has now given way in places and bollards installed to try help people traverse the roadway. Town Team were going to do work here, but MCC are now serving notices on residents instead. CH and other residents have cut back some areas themselves. MCC officers have been back up and cut a couple of places but it is really hard to get any action.</p> <p>Dog bins: JG: the chalk and pavement markings are always a good idea. GJ: ATC have a moratorium on installing any new bins.</p> <p>Toilets: TK and Town Clerk met with DHH from MCC in March 2022 who was happy with the draft and took it away to get it checked. No SLA appeared, even after writing to CEO who assured us it would be dealt with. Huge amount of correspondence over many years. Lots of work went in to the SLA – we are still chasing and getting no answer. ATC passed a motion not to pay any invoices until the SLA is in place. Money in reserves to cover invoices, but not enough for projected refurbishment costs of WHL toilets plus maintenance on top. Legal advice on purchasing toilets from MCC advised not to do this as it would not be freehold, and gave MCC an option to buy back for £1. Procedural matter for MCC to formally close the toilets to show they have advised and consulted all parties on this. Not big enough for a retail or residential unit, and is a magnet for ASB.</p> <p>MB: Can we put across in our response a suggestion to MCC for this?</p> <p>LW: Place Scrutiny Committee – submit a formal response to reflect this.</p> <p>GJ: ATC helped to keep all public toilets open when MCC wanted to close all bar those in Brewery Yard. Very proud that we have kept as many as we have open.</p>
E20/23	<p><b>To receive and approve a Finance update on the Environment Budget headings.</b></p> <p>4410: Shows £1k instead of £10k, need to vire £9k form General reserves to cover the annual contribution for the TIC, or take form other underspent Environmental headings. Request Policy and resources to approve virement from general reserves.</p> <p>Report received as a true and accurate record of Environment Budget – proposed by PB, seconded by GJ. All resolved to accept the report.</p>
E21/23	<p><b>To consider and make recommendations regarding the following planning applications:</b></p> <p><b>DM/2022/01831 Improvements to the existing pedestrian and cycle connectivity across Castle Meadows by providing Active Travel compliant routes. Including the upgrade of existing routes, access points and the replacement of the existing footbridge over the River Gavenny. Land At Castle Meadows Abergavenny Monmouthshire.</b> Final opportunity to add comments on the surface for the paths – permeable bonded resin surface in buff colour. Proposed to submit recommendation for approval by TK, seconded by CH, all approved.</p>

	<p>DM/2023/00187 Advertisement Consent - Installation of various non illuminated signage. Formerly EWM,6 High Street, Abergavenny, NP7 5RY. Former EWM – tasteful improvements. LW and GJ have had no objections for their ward. Proposed approval by GJ, seconded by PB, resolved by all Councillors to recommend approval.</p>
E22/23	<p><b>Update from Cllr Barnes on Environment Fair proposal.</b></p> <p>Reported circulated prior to meeting. Cllr Barnes explained that environmental degradation is the number one threat to our existence. ATC have done lots to improve the town, and need to engage the community. Fair will showcase around 50 contributors – a start to a wider campaign. Monmouth are well ahead, with Monmouth TC funding £15k per year for 3 years for this. Number of towns around doing similar things. Lots of meetings already taken place. Steering group in place. Outlined plans, looking for volunteers, positive responses from people who’ve not engaged before which is wonderful. Asking ATC for continued support – use of Mayors Parlour for meetings, and approaching MCC to negotiate the reduction of fees for the event on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023. Looking at engagement and advertising with the help of ATC. In Bloom looks more at biodiversity and environmental impacts. Emphasise this is not a one-off, would like this to be a yearly event. Particularly keen to engage businesses.</p> <p>TK: Engage Rotary as they have an Environmental Agenda now too. They Also have funds. Wales Rivers Union are keen to engage as well as JC from earlier tonight.</p> <p>MB: Public meeting has been arranged so will invite them and extending invite to Rotary via Cllr Eldridge.</p> <p>TK: It’s a very impressive start and has the makings for being a great event and further engagement.</p> <p>MB: How can we engage MCC in looking at how we can approach an officer regarding the use of the Market Hall for the event? TK: Suggest contacting Cabinet Member for Environment Cllr Catrin Maby.</p>
E23/23	<p><b>Reports from Town Councillors attendance at external bodies relevant to this Committee:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Abergavenny and District Tourist Association: Cllrs Konieczny &amp; Simcock</b></li> <li>• <b>Abergavenny Food Forum: Cllrs Nicholson &amp; Konieczny</b></li> <li>• <b>Abergavenny In Bloom: Cllrs Konieczny &amp; Wright</b></li> <li>• <b>CCTV user group: Cllrs George &amp; Jones:</b> JG: Online meeting – aware of 2.5% increase to costs. Further funding may be required for maintenance – info to follow. Would have been good to have request pre-budget setting. Frogmore street CCTV is down (power pack) and should be repaired in next 10 days. All others have been used to help with apprehending arsonist. Fairfield CCTV footage led to Section 59 notice on a driver. Lights are a big issue in Bailey Park. They are either on or off, and safety is an issue as we don’t know if CCTV picks up images in the area of the stand when its dark. TK commented that Mezze Me has had 6 windows in 2 years broken and has to put up with drug dealing in the WHL alley. Looking to arrange to meet MCC and Gwent Police to discuss issues. GJ commented ASB is a big issue in Grofield Ward particularly in Linda Vista and</li> </ul>

	<p>Byefield Lane. CSO's are spread very thin. JG said that 'mobile' cameras can be installed in WHL if there is a lamppost with a power supply?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Friends of Linda Vista Gardens: Cllrs Callard &amp; Simcock:</b> DS said he had been notified of the sale of Linda Vista House, by MHA's trading arm, which could have implications for the Friends group and residents. LW said Cllr Burch is aware and in touch with MHA on the sale.</li> <li>• <b>Friends of Bailey Park: Cllrs Eldridge &amp; Barnes</b></li> <li>• <b>Friends of Castle Meadows: Cllrs Simcock &amp; Callard</b></li> <li>• <b>Monmouthshire Cc Planning Committee: Cllr Konieczny</b></li> <li>• <b>Y Fenni Business Community: Cllrs Barnes &amp; Eldridge</b></li> </ul>
E24/23	<p><b>Report from County Councillors on matters affecting Abergavenny relevant to this Committee.</b></p> <p>Cllr Wright said Place Scrutiny Committee is due to discuss the Toilets report on 29<sup>th</sup> March. Cllr Jones asked about the trial gate for Castle Meadows – Cllr Wright said we are waiting on the confirmed schedule for this.</p>
E25/23	<p><b>Items for consideration at the next meeting 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023.</b></p> <p>Please email any items you wish to be considered for inclusion on the next meeting's agenda to the Ton Clerk by Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023.</p>

**Meeting ended at 8:56pm.**

**APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD**

**CHAIR ..... DATE .....**