

ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 30TH MARCH 2022 7PM VIA MS TEAMS & IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM, TOWN HALL, ABERGAVENNY.

Present: Cllr T Konieczny (Chair)
Cllr N Tatam
Cllr M Harris
Cllr R Harris
Cllr D Simcock
Cllr G Jones

Absent without apologies

Cllr L Van De Vyver

In attendance:

S Rosser (Town Clerk)
J Shipley – Friends of Castle Meadows
B Kelly – Friends of Castle Meadows

No public session.

E 27/22	Receive and approve apologies for absence Apologies were received from Cllr T Davies, Cllr S Burch and Cllr MA Brocklesby and it was resolved to accept the reasons for absence.
E 28/22	Receive Declarations of Interest Cllr R Harris – Takes no part in consideration or discussion of planning applications as sits on MCC Planning Committee.
E 29/22	To receive and approve the minutes from the last meeting on 23rd February 2022. E19/22: Correct percentage for funding to 65%. Alter wording to “commenting that the general design” to reflect that these were a Councillor’s comments and not fact. All agreed to the changes, and minutes to be approved and signed once alterations and updates have been made.
E 30/22	To receive a presentation from Jay Shipley, Friends of Castle Meadows, on a future partnership agreement with ATC. As part of the Strategy and Action Plan, ATC agreed to support a number of groups with multi-year funding, and to talk to Friends of Castle Meadows about this proposal. J Shipley thanked ATC for the opportunity, and outlined the plans detailed in the draft agreement, including the ongoing development of

the copse, planting of seeds and bulbs, enhancing the visitor experience. A big project will be the dam which needs to be repaired, and its important to have this replaced, and this will be a long term project. FoCM are committed to retaining the pond, given its popularity with users of the Meadows, offering a place of calm repose. FoCM want to engage with Riverfly – an organisation that trains observers to look at invertebrates in the river, and want to train the next generation to do this. Beyond the 3 years, and to show they are looking forward, they have ambitions to dredge the reens and look at the flow of water from the soring lines to become a feature year-round. ATC were given a tour of the FoCM website, to give a flavour of things that they do. It includes links to the MCC Active Travel proposals for Castle Meadows, lists groups that they work with, “Joining Up” refers to a project to link the areas of the Woodland Copse, with its bi-lingual interpretation board, with over 2000 trees planted some with the assistance of children from Our Lady and Saint Michaels Primary School. Pond dipping with young people and working on tackling invasive non-native species, reporting to partner agencies regarding the biodiversity. The website details nature walks which are free for people to join, which attracts lot sof people. FoCM want to maintain the health of the Meadows plus the health of those who use the Meadows. Looking for funding to enable ongoing improvements. These projects will accrue 20,000 hours of volunteer time over 3 years, FoCM are asking for £4254 towards a total of £6382 in support.

Cllr R Harris asked if the group purchase wood chips for pathways, and JS explained that there is a local small holding which does a lot of timber work and they gift the chippings to FoCM. If MCC are taking down trees then FoCM also ask them for these chippings. They have not yet had to buy any.

Cllr Jones thanked JS for a good presentation, he didn’t realise how much work was done. The website is excellent, and this needs to be promoted more. He asked about the delay to works on the dipping station, and JS explained that it fits so well with Riverfly, but they had to let Covid restrictions pass, so they can now re-engage with the new MCC engineer to get this project moving again.

Cllr N Tatam asked for clarification over the number of years this agreement would cover, which was confirmed as 3 years by Cllr Konieczny.

Cllr M Harris asked about the Riverfly training, as the quality of the water in the River Usk is so variable, and JS agreed the phosphate deposits are a huge issue. Cllr M Harris asked if FoCM have enough people trained or does MCC help so this can then be cascaded? JS confirmed they had one person qualified and this was self funded, and once their certificate arrives, they can look to get schools involved, and hope to use a small portion of funding towards this. Lots of support will be for nets, laminate cards, sectioned containers, pipettes, chairs, etc. Cllr Harris complimented the group on al that is being done, as it looks stunning, and there has been a huge amount of work put in. JS reiterated this is all volunteer groups that are dedicated as they love it – the comments and compliments will passed on to the Chair.

Cllr D Simcock asked if ATC are looking at a partnership agreement for this funding. Cllr Konieczny explained FoCM had been furnished with a template which they and the Town Clerk have started to look at and we wanted to get the group in to talk to ATC on their proposals. To reinforce the importance of this – there is significant pollution in the reens, the River Usk is a SAC, and

	<p>SSSI, with international implications, and it has the shameful ranking of being the 7th dirtiest river in the country. There is a rally on 23rd April at 11am in the Meadows, being organised by Surfers Against Sewage, to target Welsh Water who allow sewage into the rivers. Also, we want to check, when we enter a cooperation agreement, we ask for yearly reports on progress and how money is being spent. How will FoCM monitor this to fulfil an agreement? JS said as a group they will need to acknowledge support, and will monitor through their website, but they are happy to come back in with written reports and photos, plus give accounts of the expenditure and outline next steps for projects.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny stated that although ATC already write an annual report, it becomes statutory from May, so we need to tell the Public what we do with the money. He thanked them for an enlightening presentation on their projects. ATC have a statutory duty to promote biodiversity and being able to work with volunteer groups with such driving force is commended and should be supported in future. He is certain Councillors will respond favourably before May. It has taken a while to get this far, due to various other commitments, but it is part of ATC's Strategy and Action Plan, making a general decision to look at multi-year funding going forward, to be secure in developing projects over a longer time. Councillors will look at these proposals, and at the next Environment Committee, can look to ratify and sign the agreement.</p>
E 31/22	<p>To ratify a 3-year funding agreement between ATC and Friends of Bailey Park.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny had written to the Town Clerk to request a change of wording, as the word Partnership implies a legal share of liabilities, management, etc. and we don't want to share these or micromanage, so proposes we change the wording to Cooperation Agreement. This will then be the first to reflect the new wording, and future agreements can be updated at the point of renewal. This terminology won't confer liabilities to all involved, simply 2 groups coming together without liability constraints. Cllr Konieczny has done some research on this, and has sent the reasoning to the Town Clerk.</p> <p>Cllr Jones commented on the level of funding over the 3 years, and Cllr Konieczny reiterated that so far this funding pot has not been taken up this year. It is rolled into the next budget to continue funding for the groups going forward.</p> <p>Cllr R Harris commented that the wording is Partnership on the draft, and can we change this? Cllr Konieczny asked Councillors if they were all happy to change the wording from Partnership to Cooperation on this and other agreements going forward. All Councillors voted unanimously in favour of this change.</p> <p>Cllr Tatam asked about Annex 1 on the agreement, about the spring bulbs and other planting on the Avenue where MCC have removed the Leylandii, and if we knew what species of trees were being replanted there? It was confirmed that native small species like Hazel will be used to create a woodland habitat. Cllr Konieczny asked Councillors to vote if they are happy to accept this agreement, all voted unanimously in favour. The Chair of Friends of Bailey park will be invited next week to sign the agreement along with Cllr Konieczny but we are unable to publicise this until after the pre-election period ends.</p>

<p>E 32/22</p>	<p>To receive and consider a report from the Town Clerk on a Maintenance and Training Proposal in conjunction with Greenfinch Nurseries.</p> <p>The report was received and noted. In total this would cost £3024 for 14 days. Cllr Konieczny informed Councillors this has not been accounted for in next year's budget but it needs considering, to review the Environment Budget to ensure we could meet the cost. The work that is being done is invaluable a sit enables the Town Team to be more competent horticulturally, so they can take over maintenance in future so the need for this level of expertise will reduce. This level of expertise from Greenfinch and Sarah Price Landscapes along with others enables us to get a Gold in the Wales in Bloom competition and we don't want to go backwards! The total commitment in terms to accept in general has certain merit.</p> <p>Cllr Jones agrees this is important work and it is good the Town team are involved, but the commitment for 14 days seems substantial, so could we consider 7 days the review this?</p> <p>Cllr R Harris asked if this would come from our 22/23 budget? We could invest in this next year, as like any authority we will have contingency money. We've talked about 2 projects tonight concerning Castle Meadows and Bailey Park – the lungs of our town, places that make and enhance the beauty of the town, which we can continue to improve with public money. People that come to the town say they have had a fabulous experience, and this is money well spent. No problem with the proposal.</p> <p>Cllr Simcock also agreed with the proposal in principle.</p> <p>Cllr Tatam said if the proposal covers up to 14 days, there is no point tinkering with changing the number.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny asked if ATC agreed in principle, and then leave the future Council to agree times and days committed to this. Cllr Konieczny asked for approval and to strongly endorse in principle. This was proposal was supported by Cllr M Harris, and seconded by Cllr Jones, with all councillors in approval unanimously.</p>
<p>E 33/22</p>	<p>To consider and make recommendations regarding the following planning applications:</p> <p>DM/2022/00325: Not visible from the road and not overlooking anyone. No material considerations recommend approval, subject to listing consent.</p> <p>DM/2022/00357: One objection online, current gate is set back from the road wall comes away from the road. This brings it parallel with the main wall. No material considerations to refuse. Comments refer to impeding traffic and access. Recommend approval, and welcome use of reclaimed materials to maintain character of the area.</p> <p>DM/2022/00118: Cllr Konieczny had never come across such a proposal for a roof terrace garden. On looking this is permitted development. Planners may be concerned on invasion of privacy, as strength of the roof is not a planning consideration. It is a top floor flat, installing an outdoor staircase and railings. Lighting – not seen any checks regarding impact on bats. Seek clarification</p>

	<p>from an Ecology report that this lighting won't affect bats. Subject to no invasion of privacy, recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2022/00412: Cllr Jones had not received any comments from residents. The row of houses are a colour feature along the edge of the Castle Meadows. No reference to possible flooding issues. No material considerations. Cllr Konieczny commented that NRW should be notified of this and if they have raised no objections, we can recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2022/00366: Cllr Tatam commented that internal illuminated signage is something we usually refuse approval of. Concerned about the impression as you enter the town. Cllr Konieczny said the main building is due for completion shortly then the demolition of the old building will commence. When commercial firms such as these come in to towns they wish to advertise, and as it is a commercial business which this town needs, there doesn't appear to be any material consideration to reject this. Recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2022/00332: Work already approved by TP officer with a letter online. Application re-done as agreed compromise. Recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2022/00351: Recommend approval.</p>
E 34/22	<p>To receive and note an update from the Town Clerk.</p> <p>Report was received and noted. The quote for £1000 from MC Facilities to open the toilets in Bailey Park for the duration of the Summer Holidays is deemed to be cheap, even though it is a 25% increase on last year. Cllr Konieczny reinforced that he and the Town Clerk had a very productive meeting with DHH from MCC on the Toilets SLA. Our sincere thanks go to Cllr Fred Morgan for creating a model SLA to take to MCC, which DHH was very impressed with. It is hoped MCC will learn from this and use it going forward as a template.</p>
E 35/22	<p>To receive and approve a Finance update on the Environment Budget Headings.</p> <p>An invoice has been received and chased by MCC for £45k for the toilet provision in the Town. ATC agreed previously not to pay this until we are in possession of a fit for purpose SLA. £41k was agreed at the start of the financial year, and ATC have asked for a breakdown of these costs. A response has been received from A Berrington, Deputy Facilities Manager, briefly outlining costs, but no financial detail was included. Cllr R Harris was under the impression MCC were getting recompensed for additional cleans and products during Covid. Cllr Konieczny commented that staff are unlikely to have received a pay increase for these additional cleans. Town Clerk to go back to Facilities and ask for more information and a more comprehensive breakdown. Cllr Tatam enquired why it dropped from £60k in 2021 to £45k in 2022? Cllr Konieczny explained that the £45k was arrived at due to closures of toilets and changes to cleans carried out.</p>

	<p>According to some headings, we will be carrying over an underspend as we have not been able to progress work on the Bus Station beds as part of our Environment Improvement Scheme. Penypound and Baker Street are also part of this project which is still ongoing. Costs will escalate, plus inflation, so we may need to revisit this. When we set the budget we took into account a degree of the inflation level. Some areas will have underspends. Environment Committee has a large budget cover lots of major headings.</p> <p>£5k for environment groups to be carried over to next year as it has taken all year to get agreements from both FoBP and FoCM as per our Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny asked for Councillors to vote on accepting the breakdowns provided. All in favour.</p>
E 36/22	<p>To review the updated Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Cllr Burch had raised concerns previously on the approaches into town. The Town Clerk had asked Greenfinch Nurseries to look at the raised bed on the corner of Station Road and Monmouth Road, which MCC did plant with wildflowers one year, and has daffodils and tulips at present. Greenfinch suggest that this is planted up with perennials, which will mean no need for additional planting unless they die or are stolen. They have provided costs for initial plantings and preparation works, but once this is done, the Town Team should be able to take over the upkeep. This will improve this approach into town. Provisional costs have been provided to the Town Clerk which can be circulated and considered fully at the next Environment Meeting on 27th April. It was suggested that school children could be involved in looking after this bed, but concerns raised by Cllr M Harris over the safety with this being so near the A40 trunk road and a discussion over traffic hazards concluded this is not the most appropriate place to do this.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny explained that we would like to get school involvement in the planting of areas in the town, but this needs to be school based. There are then problems over school holidays with maintaining these plants during this period. It has been suggested to utilise plug plants, for school children to nurture and grow on, so they can then be planted on elsewhere in the town, so children can put these in safely in future, maybe in somewhere like Bailey Park. Cllr M Harris agreed and encouraged engagement with whoever runs gardening clubs in the schools in future.</p>
E 37/22	<p>Report from Councillors attendance at external bodies relevant to this Committee.</p> <p>No reports received.</p>
E 38/22	<p>Report from County Councillors on matters affecting Abergavenny relevant to this Committee.</p> <p>Cllr R Harris said County Council is very quiet now due to PEP. There was a planning application considered near the Waste Transfer Depot for a VeloPark cycle track at Race Course Farm. There were some objections, but no votes against it, 12 for, 3 abstentions, so it will go ahead, and should be good for Abergavenny. It opens up an area for good use.</p>

	<p>Cllr M Harris asked if anyone is having issues with MCC signage over the implementation of the 20mph zones coming into force next week? There are some roads with nothing on them still, and no signs as you come into town. Needs to be more obvious. Cllr Konieczny explained there had been an email circulated from Mark Hand at MCC saying contractors are working through the town, and to email if any anomalies are found.</p>
E 39/22	<p>Items for consideration at the next meeting 27th April 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FoCM agreement for ratification • Greenfinch maintenance and training agreement • Station Road raised bed plans and costings <p>Cllr Konieczny asked Councillors to email any further suggestions for the next meeting to the Town Clerk.</p>

Meeting ended at 8:57pm.

APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD

CHAIRMAN DATE