

ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD 9TH MARCH 2022 AT 8:01PM ON MS TEAMS & IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM, TOWN HALL, ABERGAVENNY

Present: Cllr T Thomas (Chair)
Cllr T Konieczny
Cllr M Harris
Cllr R Harris
Cllr G Jones
Cllr M Groucutt
Cllr S Burch
Cllr N Tatam
Cllr T Davies
Cllr F Morgan
Cllr M Hickman
Cllr P Simcock
Cllr D Simcock
Cllr MA Brocklesby

Absent without apologies

Cllr L Van De Vyver

In attendance:

S Rosser (Town Clerk)

Prior to the meeting commencing, the Mayor, Cllr Tudor Thomas, read out the following statement of support for the People of Ukraine:

“The events that we all have seen unfolding in Ukraine are tragic. This council offers its support for the people of Ukraine. Abergavenny Town Council is a town of sanctuary and now this will apply the refugees of the Ukraine who may come to live in Abergavenny. I am sure we all deplore the actions of Russia in invading Ukraine. There has been an outpouring of donations for the people of Ukraine but now the best form of help is via donations of money. There is a link on the MCC website to donate. Abergavenny Town Council will offer as much support as it can when refugees are placed in Abergavenny.”

Public in attendance: C Holland, L Procter, J Shipley, B Kelly

Public session:

Liz Proctor, Benita Kelly & Jay Shipley attended to speak for 5 minutes each about the Active Travel Consultation for Castle Meadows.

Liz Proctor: Introduced herself as a regular dog walker on Castle Meadows. It's the only place to walk a dog off a lead, with a vast expanse for the dogs to run safely.

Went to the meeting on 16th Feb and it was apparent at the end of the meeting that MCC had not listened. MCC did not want to advertise the consultation, or hold a public meeting. Liz has put posters up around the Meadows, and a post on Abergavenny Voice, which prompted MCC to share the link to the online consultation after these were seen by Paul Sullivan, the Active Travel Manager. The consultation being named Llanfoist Bridge and not Castle Meadows is confusing. No-one wants the cattle grids, yet the only place to write this is in free text boxes which are in places that aren't relevant to that particular part of the consultation. Signs advertising the consultation are green with black writing, and they are very small signs, at waist height – and there aren't many of them. You can plainly see that MCC won't take our views. Dogs won't see the cattle grids, neither will other small creatures like hedgehogs. Paul Sullivan wants his children to be able to cycle from Llanfoist to KHS, yet modern bikes are carbon and meant for roads, so will break going over a cattle grid. There is nowhere on the survey to ask if you would use the cattle grid access.

Benita Kelly: Friends of Castle Meadows understand the reason for Active Travel and how it contributes to health and wellbeing and the climate emergency. Supports a safer footbridge, and supports principles, but the practices are not thought out fully. There are people with no online access to the survey, I don't agree with how the survey is being carried out. MCC didn't speak to stakeholders. Castle Meadows is a jewel in the crown for Abergavenny. Town Councillors and County Councillors were in the dark about this consultation and hadn't been informed. The Farmer, whose cattle are vital for the biodiversity has not been consulted. FoCM have not been consulted. We felt we would not be listened to. We questioned what's been going on, and we have always had to consult MCC when the FoCM want to do stuff. It will alter the area from a meadow to a park. Environmental Impact Assessment should have been done at the start. The main cycle path – the present surface has been down 30 years, and this is to be widened to 3m from the current 2.4m, using Tarmac, which is not permeable. The runoff will contribute to flooding both here and downstream, plus there will be chemicals from the tarmac which will go into the water. Its not environmentally produced. The lights will affect moths and insects – there has been a 62% drop in moths across the UK. This affects all animals. Other paths are being widened and will criss-cross the Meadow – a rugby pitch size area will be lost. Then there is the new cattle grids, new gates, and the Gavenny Bridge being taken away and a new one installed less than 10 years after this one was installed. Where are they going to put all of the spoil from the paths and cattle grids?

Jay Shipley: I am exceedingly proud of Castle Meadows. I have been speaking to an environmentalist at Gloucester University and asked what I should say to you: they suggested I remind you that development begets development. If MCC doesn't have moderation and consideration to a unique habitat, we open the gates to more request like this in future. Concerned as it feels that MCC are in breach of a number of Acts and of their own policies, which can be shared with ATC. Not everyone has the opportunity to approach MCC online. Jay has been speaking to people on the meadows. Really looking for ATC to approach MCC to look at modifying the plans to meet environmental needs of the meadows. Permeable surfaces – 4 options were provided to MCC yet no response to this was received. People were concerned when we started our own survey that we were against this. We're not, but we want to find an alternative. It is suggested that cyclists are to take precedent but this is a

multi-use area. Most said don't mess with the meadows. Wellbeing: this area was of huge importance during Covid. Concerns about the insect population, which will then affect bats, fish will be affected by the run-off from the paths, so we need an environmental survey, and it needs to be considered at what time of day or night this is done. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act would suggest that we should be protecting Castle Meadows.

FC 10/22	<p>Receive and approve apologies for absence</p> <p>None received.</p>
FC 11/22	<p>Receive Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Cllr R Harris – Takes no part in consideration or discussion of planning applications as sits on MCC Planning Committee.</p>
FC 12/22	<p>To approve the minutes from 12th January 2022.</p> <p>Cllr Thomas asked Councillors for approval of the minutes of the last meeting, moved by Cllr M Groucutt and seconded by Cllr G Jones. All approved.</p>
FC 13/22	<p>To consider ATC's response to the Active Travel Consultation for Castle Meadows: https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/monmouthshire-active-travel/castle-meadows-abergavenny-the-proposals/</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny firstly concurred with the public speakers. ATC had not been approached by MCC on the Active Travel Consultation. We have a right as does every individual to respond to the consultation. After meetings with MCC officers last week on the KHS planning application and seeing how they deal with public comments it doesn't fill us with confidence. It is a failing form the Principle Council. There are 2 glimmers: Firstly, MCC are not sure of getting funding – this still has to be approved. Secondly, what would have to come if funding is found, would be the planning application. This consultation is simply a toe in the water. The planning app would be a legal process which would need to fully comply with the SSSI and SAC, so the Environmental Impact Assessment would then be a legal requirement. Ecologists would need to give a full report. This would have been welcome now, but MCC have tried mistakenly to gain momentum for the scheme. Unwittingly, they have created division. In the policy just accepted by ATC on Climate, we seek ways to find Active Travel solutions, also biodiversity improvement. Do we decide to respond at this stage as ATC or as individual Councillors, in which case there will be 15 responses not just one generic response. When Cllr Konieczny heard that they were insistent that tarmac was the only solution for he paths his heart sank. This project is huge, all the way from Ysbyty Fields to the end of the Meadows, and along the river. It is a major pathway through an important habitat. There are always alternatives. Often visits places elsewhere where cyclists are told to dismount to cross a section and then carry on. The Gavenny Crossing – why not do that here? The money could be used for more fitting materials for the paths.</p>

Questions if MCC will listen to the consultation responses. If it becomes a Planning Application, it will get full scrutiny.

Cllr Burch said you would rarely hear her criticise WG – the Active Travel Principles and the WG funding is brilliant, and she thoroughly supports it, and for MCC to secure the funding for the bridge. Unfortunately, the WG Best Practice is very prescriptive stating this needs to be a smooth quick uninterrupted route with lighting for pedestrians to feel safe. Prioritise uninterrupted flow of traffic. MCC have set out a scheme which aims to tick the boxes and follow the rules to be in with the best chance to secure the funding. Support MCC for the funding, but Castle Meadows is an exceptional site – such a sense of wildness, and a slow pace, to travel through slowly. Priority shouldn't be to whizz through as fast as you can from the station. Yes for the bridge and active travel, but not per the WG guidelines.

Cllr Jones agreed with Cllr Burch on Active Travel. He had been approached in town by groups about the dysfunctional consultation process. A senior planner from another authority had questioned why tarmac was being suggested for the paths. Already at this stage material considerations are not being listened to. As a resident the whole thing is being imposed by people who don't understand the meadows, river, etc. They aren't listening. We should put in a consolidated reply to this.

Cllr R Harris: I think we all agree its utterly important that this needs to be responded to as ATC and individually. As a County Councillor, he received an email on 23rd February from Nick Tulp from MCC Active Travel asking for clerks to share the link to the consultation (shared by Town Clerk same day) so everyone should have seen this.

Cllr Brocklesby endorsed Cllr Burch's comments, and has also been approached by ward members about their concerns and worries over the whole issue re: the consultation, using incorrect language which doesn't engage people. WSP is a Cardiff-based firm and to a large extent they have ridden roughshod over this, which shows in the minutes from the meeting on 16th February with the FoCM group. I agree with Cllr R Harris that we should respond as ATC and individually.

Cllr Groucutt: it's a tightrope, with conflicting groups not being brought together. Abergavenny Voice, FoCM, Dog Walkers, all with differing messages. MCC don't see it as protecting meadowland, but delivering statutory duties for Active Travel. The letter from Patrick Hannay in The Chronicle said the plan had been talked about for two yeas at MCC. Sensible comments on both sides, not mutually exclusive, not helped by wild stories about tree chopping or a road going through the middle. Patrick Hannay makes a brilliant suggestion, that somebody starts what should have already been happening – a skilled chair to bring all parties together to enable the right scheme to go ahead. Llanfoist Bridge is the most dangerous traffic bridge in the County. ATC should offer this as MCC has made a mess. We should suggest this to Paul Sullivan who is the safer routes coordinator. ATC can be an honest broker. Its needed for Abergavenny, but we also accept the need to get folk out of their cars so need to get a scheme to satisfy both sides. MCC may not be seen as honest brokers, but ATC might. Paul responds in the 16th Feb minutes saying it is only 4 paths but FoCM say the size being covered equates to a rugby pitch.

Cllr Burch endorsed what Cllr Groucutt has suggested. The 3 main criteria for funding: number of roads, follow guidelines, and consultation.

	<p>Proposal made by Cllr Groucutt to act as brokers to offer mediation. Seconded by Cllr Tatam.</p> <p>Cllr Tatam said a series of public meetings were held during the public realm consultation so we can do the same for this.</p> <p>Cllr D Simcock echoed Cllr Tatam's comments, the town pedestrianisation consultation worked so this is a good idea.</p> <p>Cllr R Harris said the online consultation ends 25th March - unless ATC write to MCC with their proposal to see if MCC can hold off in order for this to happen.</p> <p>Cllr Thomas said we should take on the proposal, delegate to write to MCC to delay the end of the consultation to allow time to bring people together as there are conflicting views; the bridge, active travel, and needing a path to traverse to town. Asked Councillors to vote to accept the proposal from Cllr Groucutt. All accepted.</p>
FC 14/22	<p>To consider and approve the following planning applications:</p> <p>DM/2022/00312 Replacement of new packaged CO2 gas cooler. Install new 2.4 Palisade fence with access gate at ground level on the rear side of the store. Tesco Stores Ltd, 26-27 Frogmore Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 5AH. Recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2022/00267 2 x ALDI Temporary Banners, 1x ALDI Temporary Banner with Banner Frame. Aldi Stores, Monmouth Road, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 5HF. Recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2022/00161 Part double storey rear extension and front porch extension. 3 Gunter Way, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 7AQ. Recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2022/00272 Two storey extension on existing gable end. 91 Chapel Road, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 7DR. Recommend approval.</p>
FC 15/22	<p>To consider dates for Abergavenny Town Council's AGM and Full Council meetings for 2022/23.</p> <p>AGM to be held on Thursday 12th May 2022 to give three clear days for notice. Continue after that with Wednesday evenings going forward. Standing orders state we need to vote in a new Mayor and Deputy Mayor at the AGM, so this will only give a short window to elect officers and chairs. Cllr Thomas proposed we go with 12th May for the AGM, and then stick to Wednesdays for meetings after that. All accepted.</p>

Meeting ended 8:54pm

APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD

CHAIRMAN DATE