

ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 27TH APRIL 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 MA Brocklesby
Cllr G Jones
Cllr S Burch
Cllr D Simcock

Absent without apologies

None.

In attendance:

S Rosser (Town Clerk)
Cllr C Holland (Llanfoist Fawr CC)

No public session.

No public in attendance.

Before the meeting go underway, Cllr T Konieczny expressed gratitude to Cllrs T Davies, R & M Harris, and N Tatam, who are all standing down, for giving sterling public service over their time at ATC.

E 40/22	Receive and approve apologies for absence Apologies were received from Cllr T Davies and Cllr L Van De Vyver and it was resolved to accept the reasons for absence.
E 41/22	Receive Declarations of Interest Cllr R Harris – Takes no part in consideration or discussion of planning applications as sits on MCC Planning Committee.
E 42/22	To receive and approve the minutes from the last meeting on 30th March 2022. Cllr Jones moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Cllr Simcock. Minutes approved by all councillors present, and signed by Cllr Konieczny.
E 43/22	To ratify the 3 year cooperation agreement with Friends of Castle Meadows with ATC.

	<p>Cllr Konieczny explained that we had received a detailed presentation and costings of their plan, and had approved funding at the last Environment Committee Meeting. The final document has been circulated to all, and we now ask for approval for this to be signed. All councillor unanimously approved.</p>
<p>E 44/22</p>	<p>To receive and consider a report from the Town Clerk on the replanting of the raised bed at Station Road in conjunction with Greenfinch Nurseries.</p> <p>The Town Clerk circulated a report on the proposal from Greenfinch Nurseries to improve the bed at Station Road/Monmouth Road junction. At the last meeting we had discussed if we should allow children to be involved in this project which was decided against. Some maintenance work is required on the raised bed. Part of ATC’s Strategy and Action Plan is to increase biodiversity, the look of the town, and increase its welcoming look. Designs have been drawn up by Sarah Price Landscapes for the Bus Station, Gabb Square and Penypound. This will help keep continuity. The Town Clerk’s report was received – Cllr N Tatam asked for the words ‘clear site’ to be added to 4.2 of this report, which was agreed by all Councillors.</p> <p>Point of Info from Cllr Brocklesby: Was the work tendered or did Greenfinch Nurseries approach us? Cllr Konieczny explained that this is not something Willows Nursery would undertake, and Greenfinch already maintain the ‘rusties’ and square metal planters around town. MCC didn’t have revenue to continue maintenance on these, and Willows didn’t have capacity either. We wanted to maintain the standard of Sarah Price Landscapes plans, and Greenfinch worked closely with SPL when they first set up, taking this on. They look after and maintain Tudor and Castle Street car park beds, and they are educating the Town Team on how to do this giving them the horticultural skills required to take these on. No other business does this, and as approaches to town were in our S&A plan this proposal came up in a discussion about other plantings around the town.</p> <p>Cllr Brocklesby asked for the costs of ongoing maintenance: Cllr Konieczny explained there is low maintenance skills within the Town Team at present, doing watering and weeding. We get thefts of plants which incur additional costs for replacements. ATC agreed a maintenance schedule at the last meeting for 14 days across a 12 month period maximum, to educate Town Team on maintenance and care of these plantings in the beds around the town.</p> <p>Cllr M Harris asked if we can look to install some sort of signage on the planters to show ATC pay for the works in these and the beds – for ATC’s sake we need to up the profile of all the lovely things we are doing throughout the town. Cllr Konieczny assured ATC this is being investigated in readiness for Abergavenny in Bloom.</p> <p>Cllr Burch thanked the Chair and Town Clerk for their hard work on this – well worth the money.</p> <p>Proposal to improve approach on Monmouth Road/Station Road to be accepted and enacted put forward by Cllr Jones, seconded by Cllr Burch, all Councillors in favour – approved.</p>
<p>E 45/22</p>	<p>To consider and make recommendations regarding the following planning applications:</p>

	<p>DM/2022/00478: Development at NHH. Cllr Konieczny explained this is a significant development for NHH. Anyone who has a ‘hard’ cancer currently has to travel to Velindre for treatment. Its hard enough dealing with life threatening diagnosis. Quality of development was commented on at pre-planning stage.</p> <p>Cllr Tatam said he had looked to see if any of our suggestions that we put forward at the pre-planning stage had been looked at but it appears not. Recommend to next Council to ask OVW Larger Councils if they find they have similar views?</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny asked if Councillors are happy to approve the planning application presented – all agreed – recommend approval.</p> <p>DM/2022/00533: Row of terrace houses, describes this as a front garden plot. Ramshackle garages and sheds there at present, so development will improve the area considerably. The Close is a cul-de-sac masked by trees as apart from the terrace opposite looking at the ‘shanty’ town, no others affected.</p> <p>Cllr Tatam: this is a big improvement based on the drawings, the installation of insulation is inadequate should they propose a change of use for more than just a store room.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny: if this were a dwelling, with sanitation, but it is a small building with no drainage or water, using water storage butts instead. Case would be change of use enforcement matter for planning officers to address. Its right to scrutinise this – if building for the future, they should look at better provision. Thanked Cllr Tatam for his comments.</p> <p>Councillors happy to recommend approval of application.</p>
E 46/22	<p>To receive and note an update from the Town Clerk.</p> <p>The Town Clerk’s report was received and noted.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny asked the Town Clerk to write and thank KAT on behalf of ATC for their work and data. In reading their report, smoking detritus still forms a large part of litter in the town. Several years ago Civic Society, KWT and other groups ran a campaign called “Abergavenny Is Not An Ashtray” which he still has posters and images for, too share and run another campaign. Also want to check Standing Orders, to check we can ask KAT to become ex-officios on this Committee to contribute and give info to ATC if next Council want to become more inclusive, we need to gain knowledge and input from groups like KAT. Cllr Tatam confirmed we can bring in non-voting consultees for their expertise. Cllr Konieczny said the quality of the report and the information it contains warrants being able to share this and look at it, acting inclusively and cooperatively. Important that ATC is seen to be informed at a grass routes level.</p> <p>Cllr Brocklesby thanked the Town Clerk for the report, good to see all that’s being done, what a legacy we are passing on. The Big Plastic Count – fits with our S&A to reduce single use plastics and continue to look at how we communicate change to the town. Abergavenny in Bloom – we want to win! Are we inviting schools to participate? Sits as Governor at a school which has a forest school. Discussed how good it would be to get more groups involved.</p>

	<p>Cllr Konieczny said this was raised and discussed on Monday at the Abergavenny in Bloom meeting. OLSM school have entered in their own category, but are also happy to be included as part of our submission. They are hoping to be selected for judging. Going forward, schools can enlist to take part in Wales in Bloom themselves. Heads can contact OLSM Head Teacher Mr Evans on this. Schools can bring plans to us, and we can look to include and encourage them. Change was to be inclusive, and ask for all to be involved. All Schools were approached, but OLSM were the only ones to take this on. Holidays make maintenance a challenge, but OLSM have a whole school whole community strategy. PTA give great support, fully intergenerational. Successfully implemented scheme. Entries are by 31st March each year. It would be good if by 2024 we could have all schools in our wards to take part.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny asked Councillors to accept recommendation from Town Clerk to take part in the Big Plastic Count 16-22 May. All in favour. Cllr Burch asked if we can advertise this in the Chronicle to encourage more people and businesses to participate. Town Clerk to action.</p>
E 47/22	<p>To consider recommending the Service Delivery Sub-Committee becomes a standing item on the Environment Committee Agenda for the next Council as proposed by Cllr Konieczny.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny explained that the Service Delivery sub committee had only met once as there has been discussions over who the Chair is, and no documentation can be found to confirm this. He suggests ATC looks to have this as a standing item on the agenda at Environment Committee. If anything comes up then the Committee can discuss and act on it. If Councillors agree this is a reasonable strategy to propose, we can put forward this at the AGM via the Town Clerk. It makes sense for it to be this committee that takes this on as budgets for things like toilets, town team, and planting all come to us, the only other being Christmas Lights which fall to People and Communities. We get regular Town Team reports, have more contact with MCC in this committee than others, so going forward, ATC can consider as a more effective way forward. All councillors happy to endorse this proposal going forward.</p>
E 48/22	<p>To receive and approve a Finance update on the Environment budget headings.</p> <p>The Town Clerk went through the headings individually to explain about the amalgamation of some codes (street cleansing and town crew will become town team). Trying to find information on sanitary bin contract as need to check what is being paid for across the toilets we hope to have in the SLA. Overspend in the Abergavenny in Bloom heading is down to Local Places for Nature funding being paid out from there in error, the income of £6k counteracts this.</p> <p>All councillors happy to approve.</p>
E 49/22	<p>To review the updated Strategy and Action Plan.</p>

	<p>Cllr Konieczny confirmed we have now approved the improvements to the approach by carrying out works to the Station Road raised bed. The Town Clerk informed Councillors there has been a significant move to improve St Mary's gardens after MCC received a request from a resident to look at improvements to the area. Following a conversation with a couple of residents, a site visit and some further consideration, it was felt that the shrub beds could do with an overhaul. Stacey Delbridge has agreed to take on the shrub bed at the front of the open space adjacent to the road with a Nature Isn't Neat theme. There was an opportunity to do something more holistic with the larger shrub bed to the side and consultations with Nigel Leaworthy and Stacey Delbridge led to discussions about the potential of putting in an edible/agroforestry garden which appears to have some local community support. MCC officer Mark Cleaver is gathering suitable quotes and plans to undertake this project. Cllr Konieczny commented that ATC have lead the way in encouraging improvements to green spaces including the Castle Street Car Park Green Infrastructure project at £26k, so we now need to contact the Nature Isn't Neat officers to see if Belgrave Park can be looked at next as part of our S&A plan. Funding is starting to splash around for biodiversity and improvements so we will need to start formalising plans.</p>
<p>E 50/22</p>	<p>Report from Councillors attendance at external bodies relevant to this Committee.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny attended the Larger Councils Meeting at OVW on 20th April 2022. There were a number of items of interest. The next ATC will have to have a training plan in place by June 2022, and a Self-Assessment Plan by November 2022. OVW are working diligently to bring information to aid councils with this. Payments will only be able to be made under Section 137 at £8.82 per electorate x 8335 = 73514.70, which limits our expenditure. If we can gain General Power of Competence this changes. We need to maintain unqualified accounts, so once the Town Clerk has gained CiLCA ATC can engage in more creative working, for example, at present ATC can not make a donation but we can do a grant, but under GPC we would be able to do this. Confident that Local Places for Nature Grants will be available again, so suggests a meeting with Rachel Carter at OVW to work towards areas in S&A plan for improvement. Cllr Brocklesby said both ATC and the Town Clerks should be congratulated on leaving ATC in such good shape.</p> <p>The Town Clerk and Cllr Konieczny met with William Griffith (The Angel Hotel) and Bill Harkness (Cybi Walk Shopping Precinct) on 26th April 2022. Interesting meeting to see how they can work more closely with ATC and Abergavenny In Bloom year round to maintain attractiveness of the town. Both raised sadness at the state of the signage on the town approaches into town and the state of some roundabouts. We explained these fall to SWTRA who we have found difficult to engage. William Griffith has offered to see who is best to contact and share this with ATC. We all agreed that we are working to improve the town, the environment, encourage pollinators, but the trunk roads look shambolic and let us down. Hope to hear more in due course. Cllr D Simcock asked about improvements to Llanfoist Bridge, but that falls to Llanfoist Fawr CC. The first roundabout is sponsored by Christies, the Waitrose roundabout</p>

	<p>was planted with wild flowers but left and not maintained. Mr Harkness is a keen gardener, and is keen to see Abergavenny continue to prosper, and has allocated a budget of £10k just for the Cybi Walk plantings. He is open to creating a more seasonal offer, and we discussed how to engage the wider Business Community, and how to unify the approaches into town. There are already a volume of groups on board, making a huge difference. Cllr Konieczny explained that £219mil was the amount generated by tourism pre-covid, with 17% from Abergavenny alone, due to its accommodation and access. There are 5mil people in a 50 mile radius of the town, which is more than the population of Wales. If we are to prosper, we need to make the town a destination, employment, opportunities grow on the back of this. Little things like the Tudor and Castle Street plantings show MCC what's possible, and ATC have been very good at this. Hope the new Council work with and for the whole community.</p>
E 51/22	<p>Report from County Councillors on matters affecting Abergavenny relevant to this Committee.</p> <p>Cllr R Harris had nothing to report, but wanted to express what a pleasure it has been working for ATC, being very innovative, sewn up so many loose ends, done lots for the town, with the precept at such a low level, raised this less than almost anywhere else. We've done the people of Abergavenny proud.</p> <p>Cllr M Harris also wanted to say goodbye, and expressed it has been such a pleasure to work with such a wonderful group. Policies, procedures, scrutiny – more than most TCCs, so its been a pleasure and a joy.</p> <p>Cllr Burch echoed what a pleasure it has been to work with all on ATC. At then next meeting of ATC, it will also include a representative from a 6th ward, Llanwenarth Citra, and she has been speaking to the current councillor, Cllr Holland, about the brewery development proposed for this ward, which has been covered by a consultation by Llanfoist Fawr CC, but by the next month, the new council will have the full planning app with lost to consider. Cllr Konieczny said the application may have already come and gone by that point by it will indeed be down to the next Council to consider and comment. He also reiterated that it has been a real pleasure and to see progress made. All ATC should be justifiably proud of how we have conducted business and represented the community.</p>
E 52/22	<p>Items for consideration at the next meeting 25th May 2022.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny asked Councillors to email any suggestions for the next meeting to the Town Clerk.</p>

Meeting ended at 8:30pm.

APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD

CHAIRMAN DATE