

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 25TH MAY 2022

SERVICE DELIVERY UPDATE

1. TOWN TEAM UPDATE

In October 2021 the Town Team came into existence through a SLA between ATC & MCC. Three people are stationed permanently in the town to carry out jobs such as emptying litter bins, weeding, cleaning, street sweeping, and maintenance. They also deal with any urgent issues as they arise, which are reported directly to the Town Clerk and then referred to the team for actioning.

With regard to the new plantings around town (Castle Street and Tudor Street car parks) the last ATC agreed to a one year maintenance and training schedule with Green Finch Nursery to train the Town Team and upskill them to be able to continue this maintenance going forward.

The team usually work Monday – Friday 6am – 2pm. They interact with the public regularly, as many people now stop them to say what a difference they are making, particularly with the weeding and maintenance being carried out in the car parks and walkways around town. Things like weedkiller are no longer used, so the weeding of these areas is now more of a task, but with commitments to make necessary changes to meet Environment and Climate Policies and Legislation this is a small price to pay.

MCC invoice ATC monthly in arrears for the Town Team provision. MCC cover all aspects of HR for the team, and the staff are able to continue benefitting from being covered by MCC policies and procedures for things like sickness, holidays, and pensions. MCC also provide a van, tools for the jobs, and uniforms, which is all branded in the Town Team logo alongside MCC's to signify the joint working arrangements.

2. DOG BIN PROVISION

Currently, ATC have a contract with Merlin Environmental Services Ltd to carry out a weekly collection of all dog waste from 38 bins. The cost of these collections doubled just over a year ago, and this has prompted a re-tendering of the contract, via MCC, for the whole county. MCC will invoice all Town and Community Councils who have agreed to this scheme, and the service should continue as it has for the last year. The tender process will be via Sell2Wales, due to the value of this combined contract, and will be assessed by a panel made up of representatives from across Monmouthshire.

We have mapped out where all of our bins are located, and have a good relationship with the current provider. The Town Clerk went out on a collection run in November 2021, to see how this worked, and it was noted the condition of some of the bins will mean ATC are likely to need to budget in the next few years a rolling replacement or repair programme for the bins. Whether this can be carried out by our Town Team, or if new bins are required, will have to be assessed on a case by case basis. It was also highlighted that bins are being used for other items alongside dog waste – litter and cat litter being the top two. The bin locations were also an issue in some areas – dog waste is heavy, so lifting full bags up out of bins is something that may cause manual handling issues in future. The team at Merlin have been advised if any bins are in places where hedges or trees become overgrown and limit access of the bins, to notify the Town Clerk so she can instruct the Town Team to carry out

maintenance in these areas. All bins have been labelled with numbers, to make identifying them easier and to pinpoint them on our map.

3. TOILET SLA WITH MCC

For a number of years, ATC has been trying to get a SLA in place for the toilet provision in Abergavenny. In March the Town Clerk and Chair of Environment Committee met with a senior MCC manager to go over a draft SLA which has been taken back to their Legal Team for some alterations before being sent back to ATC for final approval. In the meantime, a request was submitted to the Facilities Team for a full breakdown of how the invoice costs are reached, to see the spread of what the monies we contribute are actually spent on. As you are aware, there are three public toilet blocks in town at Castle Street, Brewery Yard, and the Bus Station. It is thought the cost of our contribution will be £45k and cover three cleans at each per day, opening and closing of the blocks, cleaning products and supplies, and some maintenance. This is ongoing, and we hope to hear something in the near future with the recent Senior Management restructure complete and the new MCC Cabinet now being in post.

ATC also pay for the sanitary bins in the toilets which is due for review, the current contract being with PHS. There is no statutory obligation to provide sanitary bis in public toilets, so consultation may be required to see if ATC continue with this provision and if so, to look at tendering this to ensure value for money is being achieved.

4. ABERGAVENNY IN BLOOM CONTRACTS AND COMMITMENTS

ATC has a rolling contract with The Willows to provide plants in the traditional planters around town and on the Town Hall between May-Sept, as well as carrying out watering in the warmer weather. When it was discovered that watering involved travelling back and forth up to 4 times to the nursery in order to refill the bowser on the van, it was decided to trial a stand pipe to enable these journeys to be cut out, and also have a provision for new plantings to be watered in by the Green Finch Nursery and Town Team when works were carried out year round.

The Town Clerk had a meeting with Amberol to look at the new planters now available with a view to replacing the blue square planters in town (£300-£400 each approx.). They offer self watering planters which are plastic, but as the current stock proves, last for 20+years. They can be easily branded with the Town Council crest to show they are funded by ATC, and now come in a huge variety of colours shapes and finishes. However, it has been suggested by the Town Team that the planters could be refreshed with new plastic paint to give them a new lease of life, as many are not in bad condition, just look tired and worn due to the weather conditions they have been in for the last 20 years. This will need further investigation, as if ATC decide to buy new planters, the old planters will either need to be sold, donated, or recycled, to be as sustainable and environmentally responsible as we can be. Many old plastic planters which MCC have replaced in recent years (with new locally made wooden planters) are now stacked up in depots around the county.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLAN

A vision for areas around the town to improve the biodiversity of the area was produced by Sarah Price Landscapes focussing on the Bus Station, Castle and Tudor Street car parks, Penypound junction, and Gabb Square. This was pre-Covid, so plans were put on hold, and started implementation between lockdowns. Castle and Tudor Street beds are now well

established and maintained currently by Green Finch Nursery who also work to educate anyone who asks about the benefit of local species and pollinators when asked about the plantings. Green Finch also look after the modern planters in town (Frogmore Street, Nevill Street, St Johns Square, Castle Street), with year-round plants rather than just floral displays for summer. The implementation of the action plan is scheduled to be picked back up in conjunction with the Town Team and MCC, with the bus station being reassessed once the current works there are complete, and then 2023 to carry out the works to install the new layout and plantings at Gabb Square. This plan has affected a change in MCC Grounds Team in what they now look to plant, and more year round local species and pollinators are now being introduced, as can be seen with the Green Infrastructure improvements in Castle Street Car Park.

Original costings guided the budget put aside for the plan, and this is likely to need reviewing this year to ensure these plans can still be fully delivered as originally proposed.