

Abergavenny Community Trust

Briefing Paper for meeting of Abergavenny Town Council's People and Communities Committee on 13th Oct 2021

Introduction

A financial partnership was agreed between the Town Council and Abergavenny Community Trust in 2019 with funding made to the Trust as follows:

£25,000 Capital funding in 2018/19 and £10,000 Revenue funding for each of the years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

The capital funding was for investing in energy efficiency measures to cut consumption and reduce the Community Centre's carbon footprint. The revenue funding was for running costs with the aim of freeing up staff to focus on developmental project work and safeguarding the asset.

The £10,000 annual contribution to the Centre's running costs has provided essential security and a platform for generating other income towards running costs, projects and further improvements to the building.

The Trust wishes to ask the Council to renew the financial partnership for the duration of the next Council term. To this end, we attach a draft Partnership Agreement for 2022-2026 for consideration by the Committee and brief information below on the activities and achievements of the Trust during the period of the Pandemic.

ABERGAVENNY COMMUNITY TRUST 2020-21

- Whilst the Centre reopened in November 2020 for a range of activities including the Trust's regular meals and coffee mornings, it was closed again after Christmas until May 2021. Despite the challenges of Covid, the Trust responded to the changed circumstances and was able to continue to address the priority areas in new ways.
- During the summer holidays of 2020, our Outdoor Learning programme of activities for small groups of families with young children was a great success. This experience paved the way for running the Community Kids parent & toddler group outside during November & December 2020 and again from May 2021. Whilst numbers have been limited to 20 families, these sessions provided a much needed space for young families to have social contact again after the isolation of lockdown.

- Following the success of the summer play activities in 2020, an expanded programme of activities during August 2021 attracted 85 families with 139 children. The Town Council's grant of £1,000, together with other small grants, was significant in enabling this to happen. (A separate report is being prepared on this).
- Providing volunteering opportunities was a key element of the partnership agreement. Covid has affected the number of people able to volunteer. However, the gardening volunteers continued to care for the grounds throughout the pandemic, and, as restrictions have eased volunteering opportunities have returned. Examples include the entirely volunteer-run Community Kids, and the food-related activities.
- Also during the summer of 2020, the Centre was the focus of a Sustainable Drainage Scheme which was enabled by Keep Wales Tidy. This is a significant development that addresses the Council's environmental concerns.
- Whilst the Centre was closed, the Trust obtained funding from the Health Board's Integrated Care Fund through GAVO which enabled us to run thirteen virtual coffee mornings via Zoom between February and the end of April. Our Community Cloud sessions were valued by previous regulars at coffee morning, including several elderly men living alone.
- This funding also paid for eight tablets which were loaned to those without IT equipment and help was given with accessing the internet. An average of 17 people took part each week with a total of 191 attendances. In addition, the Trust was able to purchase a couple of Smart TVs with a view to livestreaming activities such as Yoga for people who felt unable to enter the Centre again as it re-opened. This investment has also proved worthwhile for various room hirers where restricted numbers mean that some of their participants can only join via Zoom.

Plans for the future

There are various developments in the pipeline that would contribute to the Town Council's objectives, as well as new partnerships such as those with Action for Children, SPARKLE and the Acorn project.

These include plans for:

- improving the biodiversity of the grounds with the creation of a Nature Garden
- hosting the Abergavenny Benthylg/Library of Things project.

In addition, our new EU funded project, 'Supporting nutrition in Monmouthshire's communities' will develop our work in turning food surpluses into nutritious ready meals for distribution by partners including ACE, Cwtch Angels and the Food bank.

All of these developments will create new opportunities for volunteering.