

ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 24th Nov 2021 7PM IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM, TOWN HALL, ABERGAVENNY & VIA MS TEAMS

Present: Cllr T Konieczny (Chair)
Cllr N Tatam
Cllr M Harris
Cllr R Harris
Cllr S Burch
Cllr M A Brocklesby
Cllr T Davies
Cllr G Jones

Absent without apologies

None.

In attendance:

S Rosser (Town Clerk)
R Carter – One Voice Wales for presentation (via Teams)

No public session.

Public in attendance: A Fairey – Friends of Castle Meadows
V Evans – Head, Our Lady and St Michaels Primary School

E 11/21	Receive and approve apologies for absence Apologies were received from Cllrs L Van de Vyver & D Simcock, and it was resolved to accept the reasons for absence.
E 12/21	Receive Declarations of Interest Cllr R Harris – Takes no part in consideration or discussion of planning applications as sits on MCC Planning Committee.
E 13/21	To receive and approve the minutes from the last meeting on 20th October 2021. Remove absent without apologies for Cllr Groucutt as he does not sit on Environment Committee. Minutes Approved and signed.
E 14/21	To receive a briefing from Rachel Carter, Local Places For Nature Officer from One Voice Wales.

Rachel Carter joined the meeting via MS Teams and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Local Places for Nature grant funding and Heritage Lottery funding which we hope will be available again in 2022.

Rachel explained the Local Places for Nature was started in 2020 to highlight nature on our doorstep. The rationale is to lead by example. There had been £2million National Heritage Lottery Funding for capital projects between £10k - £100k, and £1.8million for Keep Wales Tidy pre-paid "Planting Packages" for groups to apply for and use. Rachel also explained there is a Pan-Wales Local Nature Partnership, and our local coordinator is Sali Palmer at MCC. They have £5million of funding across Wales and are looking at projects for 2022 now. Applications must meet modest measures, be in or affected by people from areas with high deprivation, can be either urban or peri-urban, and engage with minorities or vulnerable pockets of citizens within our town – BAME, mental health, vulnerable backgrounds, etc. Heritage Lottery also look for wider community engagement with projects, and a 5-year maintenance agreement. In the completion statement you must show the outcomes, be it increased volunteers or better heritage engagement.

Cllr Konieczny thanked Rachel Carter for the presentation and invited questions firstly from A Fairey and V Evans.

V Evans reiterated that OLSM School are keen to work with ATC on projects. They are sandwiched between affluent and deprived areas. Bids to support the children, and make better use of their green space, are under development. His aim is for the children to feel part of their community.

A Fairey said their ties with OLSM school has shown how the children are willing to be very involved with projects. She asked how Castle Meadows could move forward? Rachel Carter said the newly planted Nature Corridor was a great example, with lots of biodiversity already, so if there is another area needing TLC/Structural work, that would be good. A Fairey asked about if the reed dredging would be considered? If we can show the environmental purpose and offset with planting of native species somewhere nearby like hedgerows, it would be considered. You have to justify the need and benefit. Schools can tick the ALSN requirements, it helps with the improvement of children's mental health, and helps to benefit children from deprived areas. OLSM school have a diverse intake and have many students where English is their second language.

Cllr G Jones asked if there were any examples of allotments that had accessed the funding, which to date there hasn't been. More likely to go down the route of Community Growing.

Cllr Brocklesby spoke about the successful Community Orchard and the Incredible Edible planters/beds in town, asking if we should work with other groups to try and increase this work? An approach from the Friends of Nevill Hall had been received by the group wanting assistance to restore and bring back a natural habitat at the Hospital for patients and visitors to access and benefit from. Rachel Carter said this is exactly the kind of project that is looked at favourably. Good to show if you already work with the likes of Incredible Edibles and show food that is grown locally is not wasted, encouraging things like traditional harvesting, and the use of community fridges. Cllr Brocklesby said as we already support lots of these schemes, we can then amplify and bring together these groups which would be beneficial.

Cllr Konieczny said ATC act as a facilitator and has no assets, but we are aware of our duty and this has enabled us to reach out to community groups and help

	<p>them look at multi-year funding requests. ATC has a scheme in place to improve some derelict areas in the town, with two underway and 3 more to follow. ATC want to support ACE’s growing scheme, and ACT has no green space but uses containers to grow on saplings – can we support these further with this funding? Rachel Carter reiterated the funds she spoke about are for 1 year, so it depends on the meeting of modest measures, and engagement of community groups. Cllr Burch checked if its only Town and Community Councils which can apply, or could MCC apply for these funds? Specifically looking at funds for native tree planting in the town. Rachel Carter said there is another fund – the LNP officer at MCC would be able to assist with this.</p> <p>Councillors are to think about specific projects in the wards, so we can explore these and see if and how they could be incorporated into a bid for 2022. Cllr Brocklesby suggested we arrange a meeting for all community groups who would have an interest in this, to discuss if they would also like to be part of the bid.</p> <p>It was noted that this year we produced the Exploring Places in Nature leaflet, started the transformation of the Tudor Street and Castle Street beds, and the woodland corridor in Castle Meadows with interpretation sign.</p>
E 15/21	<p>To consider and make recommendations regarding the following planning applications:</p> <p>DM/2021/01753 – recommend approval DM/2021/01774 – recommend approval DM/2021/01770 – landscaping is disappointing and biodiversity requirements fall short. Room for considerable improvement on original landscaping proposals to increase the attractiveness of the site and meet biodiversity criteria. DM/2021/01656 – recommend approval DM/2021/01735 - Recommend Refusal, scale of building not in keeping with original planning application, endorse comments submitted by Cllr Groucutt. DM/2021/01772 – recommend approval DM/2021/01751 – recommend approval</p>
E 16/21	<p>To receive a report on progress by MCC on the contract for the ongoing emptying of the dog waste bins.</p> <p>Report received, and subject to refinements, in principle ATC agree this is the best way forward at this time.</p> <p>Cllr Tatam asked about how MCC’s involvement benefits the contract, and what assurances we have that if the current provider continues are we getting a decent service? The Town Clerk has been out on a round recently to see where the bins are and what is involved and feels confident that recent changes and future aspirations show they are wanting to grow in the future. Cllr Davies commented that we are stuck between a rock and hard place as we have to have the service, and noted the bins of late are in a much nicer condition.</p>

	<p>Cllr Konieczny didn't want to see a MCC affiliated agreement, but an SLA will bring protections and guarantees, with a proper structure and accountability for the service we're paying a considerable amount of money for.</p> <p>Cllr Brocklesby asked if we could look at closer locations for disposals as per our Climate Emergency – Town Clerk will ask Sue Parkinson at MCC what methods of disposal will be asked for within the tendering process. Difficult due to the nature of the waste and limited methods of disposal at this time.</p> <p>Cllr R Harris asked if we can have OVW take a look at the draft agreement and contract and ask for their feedback from their legal team.</p>
E 17/21	<p>To consider and review the Strategy and Action Plan and discuss additional actions for inclusion in the action tables.</p> <p>Most items on the current plan were now completed.</p> <p>We had managed to set up a Town Action Group, a collaboration between business groups, tourist groups, James Woodcock at MCC, market traders, and ATC, to look at enhancing the prosperity of the town. It is felt we could now look to resurrect this as we come out of the pandemic to work on maximising the offer we have.</p> <p>Previously we would have had an 'away day' to work on and develop strategies. Councillors are keen to work on the Nature grants with Rachel Carter. Cllr Brocklesby would like to see more inclusion of Market Traders as stakeholders to help support and promote them. Cllr Konieczny said previously all Mayors met to look at MCC's strategies when coming out of lockdown. It was suggested to install a canopy across the Upper Brewery Yard creating an event space and effectively extending the indoor market, utilising funding from the Covid Recovery Fund but this has not come to fruition. It would be worth following this up with Mark hand at MCC re: place-making funds for Abergavenny.</p> <p>We need to be forward-looking and put in milestones for the future Council, giving them something to work to and build from, as the strategy and action plan should be an evolving document.</p> <p>Items to be considered:</p> <p>Plug Plants for local schools to grow on and then be planted out in a designated bed in the town – gives children a stake in the town and how it looks.</p> <p>Belgrave Park – improvements such as tree planting (Woodland Planting Scheme) to include shade trees around the playground and some fruit trees.</p> <p>Opportunities for more street planting to make areas that are on the main routes driven through town more attractive.</p> <p>Swan Meadows – improving biodiversity of this area.</p> <p>Cllr Konieczny said the Gavenny Corridor is registered with Green Infrastructure. Part of this is a commitment to properly manage the eastern side of Swan Meadows, and a long-term plan to improve biodiversity through wildflower planting. Ross Road has now been underplanted for wildflower growth. ATC should have visions for these areas. MCC are more amenable to ATC taking the lead on projects such as the ongoing planting and landscaping with Sarah Price Landscapes. The Town Team now work alongside the ladies from Greenfinch Nurseries, and they are teaching the Town Team operatives</p>

	<p>about the plants and species being put in to enable effective maintenance in the future. This could be extended to other groups like care homes to encourage involvement in the biodiversity improvement of the town. Opportunity to broaden scope and be more ambitious.</p> <p>Councillors were asked to email ideas and thoughts to Cllr Konieczny to start prioritising projects, welcoming input from all members, which can then be included in the strategy and action plan and be brought to committee to be discussed and voted upon.</p>
E 18/21	<p>Report from Councillors attendance at external bodies relevant to this Committee.</p> <p>None received.</p>
E 19/21	<p>Report from County Councillors on matters affecting Abergavenny relevant to this Committee.</p> <p>No matters arising.</p>
E 20/21	<p>Items for consideration at the next meeting 22nd December 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Crisis Policy and Planning: Cllr Burch suggested as the environment emergency is such a big subject, should we have a special meeting just for this? Cllr Konieczny stated that whatever we adopt has to be achievable and within our statutory powers. There are narrow confines which we work under, and a policy will have to be deliverable locally. Cllr Brocklesby commented it would be good to have a specific meeting to establish policy and partnership going forward, and to invite the public to this. • SLA update Toilet Provision • Carbon and Eco Literacy Training update • Strategy and Action Plan updates

Meeting ended at 9:00pm.

APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD

CHAIRMAN DATE