

COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY 17TH JUNE 2020
ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To approve the design, print and circulation of the Annual Report 2019-20

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Town Council has produced an annual report for the previous two years and these have been distributed to every home in the five wards and uploaded to the Town Council website. Copies have also been made available through the library, One Stop Shop, Town Council offices.
- 2.2 The draft report was circulated to all Councillors on 21st May, to provide an opportunity for comment prior to the final draft being presented to Council on 17th June. Comments were received from two councillors.

3. PROPOSAL FOR 2019-20 REPORT

- 3.1 The cost of producing the 2019-20 report is as follows:
- English only £660
 - Bilingual £1083
 - Delivery circa £400
- 3.2 Previously, MCC Welsh Language & Equalities Officer offered assistance with translations so there will not be a cost to the Town Council to translate the annual report. The additional cost is associated with the design and printing.
- 3.3 The final draft is attached to this report. Appropriate images will be used to accompany the text.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To agree the annual report text
- 4.2 To decide whether the report should be produced as an English only publication or a bilingual publication

Dear Resident,

I am pleased to be able to share another annual report with you.

However, before I share with you details of the work of the Town Council, I must pay tribute and extend the Council's gratitude to the local volunteers who have given support and care to their neighbours so selflessly during this difficult time. The Council also recognises the significant contribution that has been made by the key and frontline workers who have helped keep us in some comfort and safety. We thank you all.

It has been a great honour to serve the communities of Abergavenny as Mayor. This civic role has given me the opportunity to meet so many amazing citizens who give so much of themselves to the benefit of the, prosperity, wellbeing, and culture of our town.

There have been many highlights, some solemn and official but many were light-hearted and joyous occasions shared with people of all ages. It is extremely difficult to single out a few to mention but I have always been proud of the Council's association and support of Abergavenny Community Enterprise Partnership (ACE) and the Abergavenny Community Centre (ACC) and I have happy memories of a successful Sunday Funday taking place on the green in Old Barn Way and a well-supported dinner to raise funds for ACC and my charity The Windsor Suite in Nevill Hall Hospital.

I attended, along with over 100 Abergavenny school children, an astonishing performance of Baba Yaga in our lovely Borough Theatre. We, the audience were all captivated by the drama and the performance was given a standing ovation by the children. Baba Yaga and I shook hands with nearly all the children as they left the theatre.

It was a great honour to sign the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of the town at a ceremony in County Hall and to lead the Council in Acts of Remembrance for those who gave their lives for our future.

The Town Council had hoped to hold a Community Dinner to celebrate the achievements of the Mayor's year of office, present the cheque of monies raised for the Mayor's Charity and honour the citizens who have been recognised by the community for their service. Unfortunately, this has had to be postponed.

I am proud that my fellow councillors have strived to make the Town Council more accessible and accountable by restructuring the decision-making processes and delivering a new website and delivering an annual report to every household in Abergavenny.

Since March 2020 the Council has been unable to meet to perform its usual function because of lockdown. That does not mean that nothing has been happening, work is still continuing by email and tele-conferencing. My term of office should have closed at an Annual Meeting held in May and the new Mayor would have been duly elected.

A date has not been set for the Annual Meeting so I will continue to act as Mayor for the interim period



Councillor Tony Konieczny
Mayor of Abergavenny

About this report

This report sets out the activities that Abergavenny Town Council has undertaken during the year 2019-20 to contribute to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the town of Abergavenny. It also provides a brief outline of what the Council does and contact details.

About Abergavenny Town Council

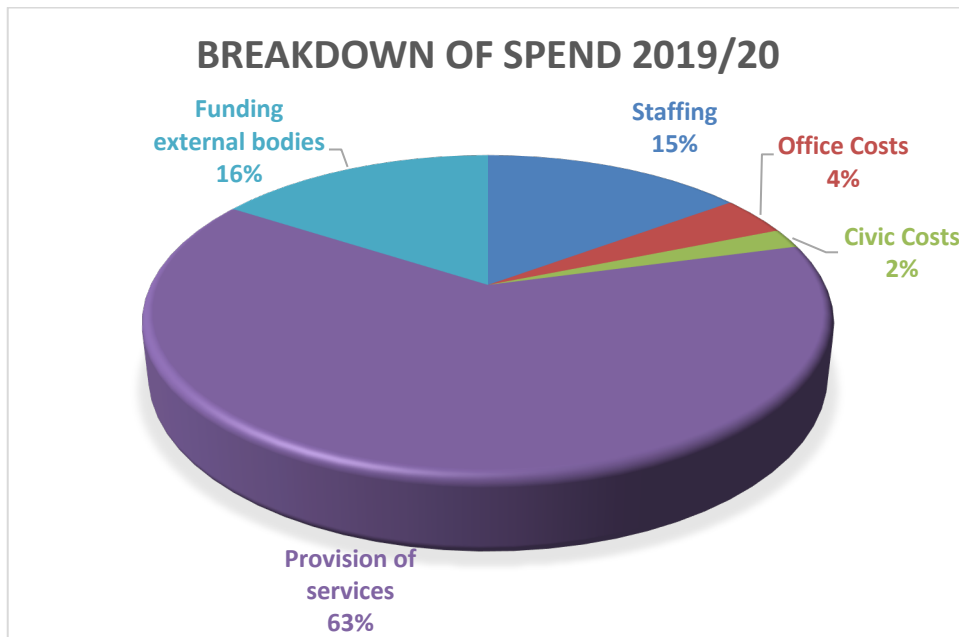
Abergavenny Town Council is the local council for Abergavenny. The Council has fifteen members covering five wards. During 2019-20 there was a by-election in Cantref ward following a resignation and Councillor Sara Burch (Labour) was elected. Her details are included, along with the details of all Councillors at the back of this booklet and can also be found on the Town Council's website www.abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk. The website also contains details of all the meetings, meeting attendance by councillors, details of the allowances paid to Councillors, grant guidance and application form and details of events in Abergavenny.

As a result of the refurbishment works in the Town Hall, 2019-20 has been a bit of a different year for the Council. Meetings have had to take place in different venues across the town as both the Council Chamber and Mayor's Parlour have been subsumed into the space that will be the new library. The Town Clerk's office has had to relocate twice into temporary office space before working from home measures were put in place. This has presented challenges for the smooth running of the Council.

Each year in May the Council elects a Mayor who represents the Town Council at events throughout the year. In 2019-20 the Mayor was Councillor Tony Konieczny and Councillor Tudor Thomas was Deputy Mayor. Due to the impact of the pandemic on the Council's meetings, both Councillor Konieczny and Councillor Thomas will continue as Mayor and Deputy Mayor until an election takes place later in 2020-21. The Town Council is supported by a small team consisting of two staff (one fulltime, one part-time) based in the Town Hall in Abergavenny. Approval has been given for the employment of a part time of Financial Officer in 2020.

The Town Council gets almost all of its funds from its precept. This is, an additional amount added to the Council Tax bills based on the Town Council's estimated expenditure. For the financial year 2019/20 the Council's precept was £374,233, We started the year with £295,285 in the bank and spent £55,998 on salaries and

£330,183 on other expenditure which includes paying for services, supporting local events and awarding grants. At the end of the year we were left with £286,488 in the bank.



The Town Council's main responsibilities include:

- Paying for litter picking and street cleaning in the town centre
- Paying Monmouthshire County Council to keep open public toilets in the town and that the toilets in Bailey Park are open at weekends.
- Paying for the emptying of sanitary and nappy waste bins in the public toilets
- Paying for the dog waste bins to be emptied weekly
- Providing the Christmas lights in the town and arranging the 'switch on' event
- Paying for CCTV in the town
- Management and maintenance of all the town centre planters, hanging baskets and other floral displays around the town
- Financial support to ensure that the town has a Tourist Information Centre
- Supporting local events and festivals
- Organising free events in the town.
- Providing grants to local groups
- Financially supporting key organisations such as Abergavenny Local Citizens Advice.

Abergavenny Town Council Strategy & Action Plan

In 2018/19, the Town Council prepared a strategy & action plan. This sets out what the Council would like to achieve for the community of Abergavenny together with future changes to the Council. This action plan can be found on the Town Council's website www.abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk or by contacting the Town Clerk to

request a copy. During 2019/20 the Town Council has been busy implementing many of the actions.

So what did the Town Council do in 2019-20?

Much of what the Town Council did and continues to do falls into four categories – improving lives of children and young people, tackling an ageing population, improving the natural and environment and helping the local economy to thrive but the Town Council has also been involved in activities that do not fit neatly into one of these categories. In 2019-20 these were:

Town Events

Each year the Town Council organises a number of free events. In April, four choirs based in Abergavenny performed for an audience of nearly 200 people at the Town Council's free concert in the Market Hall. The Town Council with ACE (Abergavenny Community Enterprise) organised a 'Fun Factory', which was a free event on the green, Old Barn Way with face painting, crafts, bouncy castle, circus skills workshop. And in September, Abergavenny Borough Band gave a free concert in Brewery Yard. The Town Council also arranged for Year 6 pupils to attend a free theatre performance in the Borough Theatre.

The Christmas Light Switch-On Event in November was well attended despite the dreadful weather and the change of location of the stage for the switch-on.

Twinning

Abergavenny is twinned with two towns; Beaupreau in France and Ostringen in Germany. The Town Council took part in celebrations in Abergavenny during Easter 2019 when a 200 strong delegation from Beaupreau visited, this included members of Beaupreau football teams and their families. The weekend celebrations included the unveiling of a sculpture in the seating area by the cinema, this sculpture (by a local artist) was funded by the Beaupreau Twinning Association and has representation of the Gallic cockerel and a red kite to represent Wales.

In 2019-20, The Town Council made a decision to twin with Domboshawa in Zimbabwe, a similar sized town to Abergavenny about 40 miles from Harare. Progress with setting up a twinning association which included hosting a public meeting has stalled following the coronavirus restrictions but will start again shortly.

Changes to the operation of the Council

In September 2019, the Town Council made some changes to the way it makes decisions. It set up an Environment Committee, Policy & Resources Committee and People & Communities Committee. All these Committees can now take decisions instead of only being advisory. Previously only recommendations could be made which were then referred to Full Council for decision. This makes for quicker decision

making. All Council meetings are open to the public. More information is available on the website www.abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Also, the Town Council has taken a decision that no public money will be spent on the purchase of alcohol as this previous practice was considered to be an unacceptable use of public money. Previously alcohol had been served at council functions and mayoral receptions. Changes have also been made to the way the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected to ensure conformity with the legislation and election at the Annual Meeting. Each year, there will be a Community Dinner at which the outgoing Mayor will have the opportunity to thank people in the community for their support and hard work, present the Community Awards and present the cheque to his/her chosen charity. Unfortunately, this dinner arranged for April 2020, has had to be postponed.

In 2019-20, the Council arranged for a specialist company to clean and repair the chains of office which were damaged and in a poor state of repair. Cases have also been purchased for their safe keeping to prevent future damage. Councillors robes have also been repaired and cleaned.

Investment in Gateway Credit Union

The Town Council has invested £20,000 in Gateway Credit Union. Member savings are used to provide loans to individuals. The Town Council's investment is protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS)

Grant to Borough Theatre Refurbishment

In 2019-20, the Town Council gave a substantial grant of £50,000 towards the refurbishment of the Borough Theatre which is now due to start in late 2020. In particular, the grant will contribute towards improved toilet facilities and accessibility improvements as well as a redesigned foyer area.

Signing of the Armed Forces Covenant

In January 2019, the Mayor (along with the Mayors of the four other towns in Monmouthshire and Monmouthshire County Council) signed the Armed Forces Covenant. It is a pledge that together we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives.

How have we contributed to Children & Young People services?

- Financial support was given to organisers of the town festivals and Abergavenny Carnival which resulted in opportunities for young people to access activities
- We have entered into a three year agreement with Abergavenny Community Enterprise (ACE) Partnership on Hillcrest Road who provide a wide range of

support to families and young people including subsidised trips during school holidays and a Santa Grotto.

- The Town Council contributed £12,000 to Monmouthshire County Council to run the summer playscheme; 148 children attended. This playscheme provided free activities for children during the summer holiday based in Deri View School and Abergavenny Scout Hall.
- The Town Council worked with Monmouthshire County Council Youth Service to offer a programme of subsidised activities during the summer holidays for Abergavenny young people aged over 11 years. Activities included a residential course at Gilwern Outdoor Education Council, Skate Jam, Graffiti workshop and BBQ.
- Together with ACE, we organised the Sunday Fun Factory, which took place on the green, Old Barn Way in May 2019. This was a free family event and included face painting, bouncy castle, circus skills workshop and arts & crafts.
- In September 2019, all Year 6 pupils from Abergavenny primary schools (including Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni) were given the opportunity to attend a free performance in the Borough Theatre as the Town Council considers it important for children to have different experiences such as enjoying a live theatre performance. Three schools participated and over 100 children (and the Mayor) enjoyed the wonderful Baba Yaga performance.

How have we contributed to the Challenges of an Ageing Population?

- The Town Council signed a three year funding agreement with Abergavenny Local Citizens Advice, the first local council in Monmouthshire to do so. Each year, Citizens Advice will receive £12,000 to keep services in Abergavenny. Citizens Advice provide free advice and support on a wide range of matters.
- We have entered into a three agreement with ACE. ACE provides support and advice and friendly face for older people. In 2019-20 ACE received £8,000 this enabled their opening hours to be extended.
- We have entered into a funding agreement with Mind Monmouthshire for the provision of wellbeing services. The first payment will be made in 2020-21
- We supported voluntary organisations by helping them work together, promoting their activities and helping with funding
- We paid £13,000 for CCTV in the town which contributed to making the town centre a safer place and reduced the fear of crime
- The Town Council organised a free community choir concert in the Market Hall featuring Abercappella. Phoenix Singers, Tenovus Sing With Us Choir and AAODS (Abergavenny Amateur Operatic & Drama Society).
- We funded community organisations such as Abergavenny Bowls to improve their facilities and retain and attract members.

How have we contributed to Abergavenny being an economically thriving town?

- We continued to financially support (approximately £12,000) many of the town's festivals which offer a range of activities throughout the summer for residents and visitors alike eg Cycling Festival, IYE Festival, Wall2Wall Jazz Festival, Writing Festival, Arts Festival.
- We provided significant funding (£58,000) to Monmouthshire County Council to ensure that there are public toilets in the town and we have continue to pay for a contractor to provide and empty nappy and sanitary bins in the toilets (£2400)
- We provided significant funding (£40,000) to Monmouthshire County Council to ensure that our streets were cleaned and arranged a 'deep' clean of the town centre streets
- We financially contributed to the Visit Abergavenny brochure which was distributed widely throughout in the UK to encourage more visitors to visit our town
- With our support of £10,000 Abergavenny continues to have a Tourist Information Centre which has now relocated to the Town Hall
- We organised and paid for the Christmas Lights at a cost of £22,500 and organised the Christmas Light Switch-on event which despite the dreadful weather was well attended.
- We managed and maintained the planters, hanging baskets and other floral displays throughout the town during the summer months at a cost of £12,000. We also provided attractive winter planting with ferns, hellebores and bulbs in the planters on St John's Square and Nevill Street. Through the efforts of so many people in the town, Abergavenny won third place and a Silver Gilt award in the 'Town' category in the Wales in Bloom competition.
- We worked with Monmouthshire County Council and Y Fenni Business Community to select the rusty planters for the town centre and contributed towards their purchase
- We paid for bunting to be put up in the town centre
- We paid £6,000 for the production of the wonderful 'pollinators' decorations in the Market Hall which are created annually for the Food Festival and we also subsidised Food Festival stalls in Frogmore Street which were offered in the first instance to local traders.
- The Town Council has set up a Town Centre Action Group which seeks to bring different organisations together to work jointly on projects and promotion to prevent duplication and to pool ideas and resources. Only one meeting took places before social distancing restrictions came into force so the initial ideas for new town centre banners/bunting, nominating Abergavenny for The Great British High Street have been put on hold.
- The Town Council has agreed to prepare a letter to the Melville Centre for the Arts in support of their application for funding from the Heritage Fund.

How have we contributed to the protection and enhancement of the environment?

- The Town Council continues to promote Refill Abergavenny which seeks to reduce the use of single use plastic by making refilling water bottles easy to do. Cafes and restaurants in the town display a Refill sticker which indicates that water bottles will be refilled for free
- The Town Council agreed to install an outdoor water fountain in Brewery Yard and will arrange for this to happen as soon as it is practicable to do so.
- The Town Council has provided a grant to ACE for replacing single glazed windows which will help reduce energy bills and reduce energy usage
- The Town Council paid (£6,300) for the weekly emptying of dog bins located around the town and arranged for the installation of two additional bins on Avenue Road and Bay Tree Lane
- The Town Council supported the Monmouthshire County Council initiative 'Give Dog Fouling the Red Card' and assisted at Awareness Raising days
- Every month the Town Council commented on planning applications and made recommendations to Monmouthshire County Council
- We pulled together a group of interested organisations to prepare an application for a Heritage Fund grant for the restoration of the gates at Bailey Park. However, at present Heritage Fund grants are not available due to the pandemic so the application will be resubmitted when appropriate.
- We agree to replace tired areas of planting around the town with colourful, pollinator friendly plants. The areas identified are the raised beds by the bus station, beds in front of Castle Street and Tudor Street car parks, area by the side of the cinema and beds on the corner of A40 and Penypound.
- The Town Council has a duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act to promote and enhance biodiversity and to prepare an annual report. The annual report is available on the Town Council's website.

How are we becoming a more responsive Town Council?

- The Town Council has a redesigned website which is more user friendly, more informative and in a mobile friendly format.
- Information of all the Council's meetings together with all the reports are now available on the new website.
- We carried out a consultation on the new planting schemes planned in 2020 onwards. Overall, the comments were positive and work will commence as soon as it is possible to do so.
- As the work in the Town Hall was underway for most of 2019-20, the Town Council held its meetings in various venues and the pandemic resulted in meetings being cancelled. The Town Council is hoping to be holding meetings again in the newly created meeting space in the Town Hall in Autumn 2020. The public are welcome to attend Council meetings and raise issues of concern.

The meeting dates are published on the website and also posted on the noticeboard outside the Town Hall.

- The Town Council has responded to various local and national consultations to put forward comments on how different proposals may impact, both positively and negatively, on Abergavenny.

So what do we want to do in the future?

We want to play our part in helping communities in Abergavenny recover from the coronavirus. How we do this has not yet been agreed. The Town Council could assist in encouraging residents and visitors to support town centre businesses and could support community groups and voluntary organisations to continue to offer support to the most vulnerable and those in need.

We also want the Town Council to be more accessible. When the Town Hall refurbishment is completed, the Town Clerk's office will be more accessible and more visible and will be located near the entrance to the new library. We would like to carry out more community engagement sessions and encourage residents to attend Council Committee meetings.

The Town Council, working with Monmouthshire County Council, will over the next few years refresh the planting in various sites across the town. Work was planned to start in Spring 2020 but will now be Autumn 2020. The planting in the beds in front of Castle Street and Tudor Street car parks will be removed and replanted with pollinator friendly species which will also offer different colours and textures and interest.

The Town Council will continue to work with Monmouthshire Youth Service and with the local schools.

The Town Council will continue to help residents and visitors reduce their use of single use plastics. Promoted by Abergavenny Town Council, Refill Abergavenny has signed up over 25 restaurants and cafes in the town centre where you can get your water bottle filled for free. This reduces the need to buy single-use plastic water bottles, good for the environment and your purse so look out for the sticker and refill your water bottle for free.

Who are your Councillors? <with photos>

<insert titles on wards>



Cantref Ward

Councillor Sara Burch (Labour) 01873 857751

saraburch@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Councillor Fred Morgan (Conservative) 07762 000831

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Councillor David Simcock (Labour) 07810 855482

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Castle Ward

Councillor Morgan Lewis (Conservative) 07449 630748

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Councillor Martin Hickman (Conservative) 01873 859543/07956 240594

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Councillor Tony Konieczny (Labour) 07890 451820/01873 858912

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Grofield Ward

Councillor Nick Tatam (Liberal Democrat) 01873 853574

nicktatam@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Councillor Penny Simcock (Labour) 07800 768615
pennysimcock@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Councillor Gethin Jones (Labour) 07539 506663
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Lansdown Ward

Councillor Roger Harris (Labour) 01873 858143
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Councillor Maggie Harris (Labour) 01873 858143
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Councillor Martyn Groucutt (Labour) 01873 857153
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Priory Ward

Councillor Teslin Davies (Labour) 01873 855536
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Councillor Tudor Thomas (Labour) 01873 840299
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Councillor Luke Van de Vyver (Independent) 07733 699215
lukevandevyver@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

How to contact the Town Council

Jane Lee, Town Clerk clerk@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk,. 01873 735820 or
pop into the office in the Town Hall.

< Logos Refill, Town of Sanctuary, Fairtrade, Living Wage, Armed Forces Covenant >