

Abergavenny Town Council Annual Report 2020-21

Welcome from the Mayor

Dear Resident,

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

It's been a difficult year for us all and I would like to thank everyone who has gone that extra mile to help others during this pandemic.

Councillors and officers have had to get to grips with using remote meeting software as all, apart from one, of our meetings in 2020/21 have been held remotely. We have continued to get business done and, in this year, we have implemented a number of projects that will benefit our town namely the restoration of Bailey Park gates, resurfacing of the hard courts area and pollinator planting in front of Castle St and Tudor St car parks.

<to be added to by new Mayor>

Mayor of Abergavenny

About this report

In the following pages we have set out what Abergavenny Town Council aimed to achieve in 2020-21 and what has been achieved despite the challenging circumstances. We also provide 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. We co-opted Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby (Labour) on to the Council in October to fill a vacancy in Castle Ward. Cllr Brocklesby's 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. Residents are welcome to attend Council meetings and can address the meeting during the public session at the start of the meeting. For more information on attending meetings please contact the Town Clerk.

Although the refurbishment works in the Town Hall concluded in 2020-21, the coronavirus pandemic has meant that the Town Council has not held any meetings in the Town Hall during this year nor have staff been working from the office on a permanent basis. Where possible, staff have been working from home and Council meetings are taking place remotely. During this year, only Full Council has been meeting monthly; committees such as Environment Committee and People & Communities Committee have not been meeting and any business normally conducted by these committees has been discussed and decided upon at the Full Council meetings.

As part of the Town Hall refurbishment, the Town Council has a new Mayor's Parlour which can accommodate smaller meetings, however we will use the larger community meeting room for the Full Council meeting. All the Town Council's accommodation can be found on the first floor of the Town Hall by the entrance to the library.

Each year at their Annual Meeting Councillors elect a Mayor. The Annual Meeting is held in May, however due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic the Annual Meeting in 2020 was postponed until October 2020. At this meeting Councillors voted that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor (Councillor Tony Konieczny and Councillor Tudor Thomas respectively) who held positions in 2019-20 would continue for an additional year. The Town Council continues to be supported by a small team consisting of two staff (one fulltime, one part-time) based in the Town Hall in Abergavenny with a vacancy for a part-time Finance Officer.

The Mayor has represented the town at the VE Day commemorations and Remembrance Sunday and we were pleased to be able to arrange for the Remembrance Sunday service at the War Memorial to be live streamed as

coronavirus regulations limited the number of people that could attend. The Mayor also featured in the video of the Christmas Lights Switch On and virtually presented the Young Writers prize as part of the Aber Writing Festival. Although a quieter year for the Mayor, Cllr Konieczny has chaired the monthly Council meetings and represented the Council at meetings with Monmouthshire County Council on opening up the town centre following the first lockdown.

The Town Council gets almost all its funds from the 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 £XXX, We started the year with £X in the bank and spent £X on salaries and £X on other expenditure which includes paying for services, **supporting local events** and awarding grants. At the end of the year we were left with £X in the bank.

<insert pie chart showing breakdown of spend>

How has Coronavirus impacted on the work of Town Council?

Unsurprisingly, coronavirus has impacted on the work of the Town Council. We have not been able to arrange the calendar of free events which included our biggest event, the Christmas Lights Switch On. Also, many of the town's festivals that bring so much vitality and diversity to our town were cancelled, so funding that the Town Council usually provided to enable these festivals to go ahead was not required. The Town Council also experienced some delay with the implementation of a number of projects and also we had reduced costs associated with contributions towards services such as the Tourist Information Centre and public toilets.

In October 2020, the Town Council agreed to reallocate some of this underspend to fund other projects that benefit the town including resurfacing the hard courts area in Bailey Park for informal recreation and also to restore the main gates and associated railings at Bailey Park. During the pandemic, we all appreciated the greenspaces on our doorstep and the Town Council is pleased to be able to invest in Bailey Park; one of the most popular and well used greenspaces. Any money that is unspent at the end of the year is kept by the Town Council for spend in the town in future years.

Before the first lockdown, the Town Council had started to work more closely with Y Fenni Business Community and others to promote the town and co-ordinate activity. However, this initiative has made little progress.

Abergavenny Town Council Strategy & Action Plan

In 2018/19, the Town Council prepared a strategy & action plan which was revised in December 2020 to include more environmental actions. 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. This annual report sets out how we've performed against the action plan.

So what did the Town Council do in 2020-21?

This has been a challenging year which has required all of us to work differently. We are pleased that we've still be able to achieve so much which improves lives of children and young people, tackles an ageing population, improves the natural and built environment and helps the local economy to thrive. However, there are some actions that we've not been able to progress this year, one being the free events that the Town Council usually organises but these will be back in the calendar as soon as it is permitted.

Children & Young People

Our Action Plan states that we work in partnership with other organisations to do more to **improve the opportunities for young people** not just through the provision of activities and facilities but also through making available services. We aim:

- To ensure young people with emerging mental health issues have access to and are offered appropriate services
- To increase opportunities for young people to have a say in what happens in their town
- To improve understanding of whether youth provision in the town is appropriate & sufficient and take forward identified projects
- To provide engaging and stimulating summer holidays activities for young people and free healthy meals
- To promote events for children and young people

What have we achieved?

- We continued to support Abergavenny Community Enterprise (ACE) Partnership on Hillcrest Road who provide a wide range of support to families and young people and specifically distributed food parcels in the run up to Christmas
- We continued to support Abergavenny Community Trust who run Abergavenny Community Centre where activities for children were available when lockdown was eased.
- The Town Council contributed £12,000 to Monmouthshire County Council to run the summer playscheme; X children attended. This playscheme provided covid safe free activities for children during the summer holiday based in Deri View School
- We financially supported a Monmouthshire County Council project to offer support to young people in Abergavenny aged over 11 years with emerging emotional wellbeing issues
- We purchased a new interactive smartscreen for the children's area of the library
- We have supported Abergavenny Community Trust with their outdoor playscheme

- We agreed funding for the resurfacing of the hard courts area in Bailey Park to create a space for informal recreation. The work was carried out in the year 2021/22.
- We started discussions with KHS about having regular discussions with the School Council on the issues that young people are concerned about and whether local actions can be taken jointly with the Town Council. However, the pandemic has stalled progress.

Challenges of Demographic Change

Our Action Plan states that a priority for the Town Council is to ensure there is **provision and support for the older generation** and to seek innovative ways to bring different generations together. The coronavirus pandemic has contributed to a growing number of adults suffering from anxiety, loneliness and depression. By supporting and promoting local organisations that support mental health, the Town Council can ensure that appropriate support is available locally. We aim to:

- Ensure public service provision accommodates the needs of older people
- Community based organisations provide activities that seek to reduce social isolation
- Improve intergenerational interaction
- Promote events for older people
- Support services that support older people

What have we achieved?

- We made our first-year payment of £10,000 to Mind Monmouthshire for the provision of wellbeing services, a vital service particularly with the significant impact that coronavirus has had on mental health.
- We continue to fund Abergavenny Local Citizens Advice with an annual contribution of £12,000
- We continued to support Abergavenny Community Trust who run Abergavenny Community Centre where activities for older people were available when lockdown was eased and available virtually.
- 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
- We have arranged for the community use of the toilets at the Auberge which gives access to toilet facilities in the Frogmore St area of the town and paid Monmouthshire County Council £30,000 for the cleaning and maintenance of the public toilets
- We grant funded Friends of Bailey Park to provide additional seating in Bailey Park and to buy plants for all to enjoy.

- We grant funded Abergavenny Community Enterprise (ACE) Partnership on Hillcrest Road to provide food parcels in the run up to Christmas, this included food parcels to a number of elderly households
- We continue to promote the different 'Friends' groups that help maintain the different parks in the town as this is a good way for people to meet new people and keep active

Communities and Businesses are Economically Thriving and Well Connected

Our Action Plan has a priority to **ensure that communities and businesses are economically thriving and well connected**. The Town Council currently delivers many services or financially supports services which contribute to the local economy. These are Abergavenny in Bloom, public toilets, Tourist Information Centre, street sweeping and provision and emptying of dog waste bins. The economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented and Abergavenny Town Council will play its part alongside business groups, other public sector organisations and local and national government to help the local economy recover. We aim:

- To have cleaner streets
- To improve the appearance of the town centre
- To have public toilets which meet the needs of users.
- To continue to work with town centre businesses and others to promote the town and what it has to offer

What have we achieved?

- We continued to financially support the town's festivals that went virtual. These were the Wall2Wall Jazz Festival and the Writing Festival. Both promoted Abergavenny in their festival video promotion and engaged with a global audience.
- We provided significant funding (£30,000) to Monmouthshire County Council to ensure that the public toilets in the town were open when it was safe to do so. For many months the toilets were closed to reduce the transmission of covid-19. Separately, we continue to pay for a private contractor to provide and empty nappy and sanitary bins available in the public toilets
- We provided significant funding (£36,000) to Monmouthshire County Council to ensure that our streets were cleaned and litter picked up daily.
- With our support Abergavenny continues to have an extensive Tourist Information Centre (TIC) which is now relocated in the Town Hall. Unfortunately, the TIC has been closed for much of 2020-21.
- The Town Council co-ordinated the volunteer Town Ambassador scheme. A rota of volunteers provided a warm welcome and advice to visitors and

residents; this was particularly important when the Tourist Information Centre was closed

- We organised and funded a new Christmas Lighting scheme which was extremely well received. Unfortunately, we couldn't hold a switch on event but Y Fenni Business Community produced a wonderful virtual switch on video which featured the Mayor.
- We managed and maintained the planters, hanging baskets and other floral displays throughout the town throughout the year at a cost of XXX. This includes arranging for all the floral displays to be watered. The Wales in Bloom competition was cancelled in 2020.
- The Town Council has taken on the maintenance of the planters in Frogmore Street bringing the number of permanent planters to over 40.
- We already pay for a person to keep the town centre streets litter free. However, an additional budget was agreed this year to enable the setting up of a new team in summer 2021. This team will focus on the maintenance of the streetscene and will undertake works such as street cleaning, maintenance of street furniture and fencing, horticultural activities etc.

Environment and Climate Change

Our Action Plan states that the Town Council has a **duty to protect, enhance and promote biodiversity** and that we will seek innovative ways to fulfil our duty. The Town Council does not own or manage land but we can increase engagement and activity with Monmouthshire County Council and local environmental groups who protect and enhance biodiversity. The Town Council will continue to consider the impact of our own practices in tackling climate change. We aim:

- To reduce the use of single-use plastic
- To provide voluntary environmental groups with a more sustainable future including multi-year funding
- To enhance biodiversity
- To promote biodiversity
- To improve the maintenance and enhancement of Bailey Park, Linda Vista Gardens and Castle Meadows
- To contribute to the MCC Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy and resulting projects
- To reduce the incidences of dog fouling in the town

What have we achieved?

- 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 and upload their details on the Refill app. We had planned to install a water fountain at the back of the Market Hall but this has been delayed.

- The Town Council paid £7000 for the weekly emptying of dog bins located around the town, bins are usually emptied on a Wednesday.
- 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
- The Town Council agreed to use some of the underspend from the postponement of activities to fund the restoration of the main gates at Bailey Park and the associated railings. These were removed from site in November 2020 and reinstalled in X
- In conjunction with Llantilio Pertholey Community Council, the Town Council carried out an Allotments and Community Gardens survey to find out more about peoples veg & fruit growing activities. As a result, the Town Council will lead on discussions with landowners to identify potential sites for a range of different growing spaces
- We are leading on the pilot scheme Abergavenny Adopt a Garden, which matches would-be gardeners with people who own too much garden, preferably living close to each other
- We started on our phased programme to replace tired areas of planting around the town with colourful, pollinator friendly plants. The first areas to see a transformation are the beds in front of Castle Street and Tudor Street car parks. The Town Council was fortunate to receive a grant from the Heritage Fund and Welsh Government to support this new planting.
- The Town Council approved a budget starting in 2021/22 for multi-year funding for local environment groups to help them enhance biodiversity and enable them to plan their activities with greater financial certainty

Abergavenny Environmental Growth

Abergavenny Town Council applied to the Heritage Fund for a Local Places for Nature grant. We were successful and this has enabled the Town Council to take forward an exciting programme of change to improve and enhance biodiversity in the town.

The main part of this project was the replanting of the beds in front of Castle St car park and Tudor St car park. These areas have not been changed for decades and were dominated by cotoneaster. Monmouthshire County Council agreed to remove all the planting and prepare the beds whilst the Town Council engaged local landscape designer Sarah Price to design, select and supervise the planting of the new beds. The planting is only just coming into bloom but already pollinators are benefiting from the wonderful pollen rich planting and we are benefiting from the interesting and colour

planting scheme. We also took the opportunity to improve the visibility at the Tudor St car park so that pedestrians can see vehicles turning into the car park and we've created a footway to provide pedestrians with a safe access separated from vehicles.

Thanks to Year 6 pupils from Our Lady & St Michaels Primary School, we have been able to install 30 new nest boxes in the town. Over three days, pupils made the nest boxes from scratch under the guidance and supervision of Richard Evans from Project Nestbox. Pupils had a great time and also learnt more about conservation and why we need to give nature a helping hand. Ten boxes have been installed in school grounds with the remaining being located in Linda Vista gardens, Bailey Park and the copse in Castle Meadows.

Castle Meadows will also benefit from this project as some funding is earmarked for Friends of Castle Meadows to plant a native wildlife corridor linking two areas of woodland. Due to the wet winter, planting was not possible in 2020/21 so has been delayed until the 2021 planting season. This wildlife corridor will benefit non flying insects and small mammals

And to link all the town's greenspaces together, the Town Council has taken the lead on producing a new biodiversity trail leaflet. This leaflet provides information on what flora and fauna can be seen within a few minutes walk from the town centre. Copies of the leaflet are available from the Tourist Information Centre and can be downloaded from the Town Council website.

<insert logos & photos>

How are we becoming a more responsive Town Council?

- The Town Council now has a Facebook page and regularly posts updates on the work of the Council and its partners
- We write a regular column in the Abergavenny Chronicle giving details of initiatives being taken forward by the Town Council and offering more insight into how the Town Council operates.
- Information of all the Council's meetings together with all the reports continue to be available on the website.
- 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 new actions will we be taking forward in 2021?

We want to continue to play our part in helping communities in Abergavenny recover from the coronavirus through the promotion of the town and helping with its long term prosperity

The Town Council, working with Monmouthshire County Council, will continue to refresh the planting in various sites across the town. The next phase will see new planting in the two raised beds by the bus station

We will set up the new team dedicated to improving the streetscene. Later in the year their hardwork will be evident with fences painted, signs cleaned, benches restained, vegetation cut back and so on.

Through direct funding we will provide play opportunities at Abergavenny Community Centre and through Monmouthshire County Council playscheme.

We will continue to liaise with landowners to increase the provision of fruit & vegetable growing spaces in the town

We will evaluate the success of the Abergavenny Adopt A Garden scheme and potentially roll out across Abergavenny

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

fredmorgan@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Councillor David Simcock (Labour) 07810 855482

davidsimcock@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Castle Ward

Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby (Labour)(co-opted) 07946 079918

Maryannbrocklesby@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Councillor Martin Hickman (Conservative) 01873 859543/07956 240594

martinhickman@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Councillor Tony Konieczny (Labour) 07890 451820/01873 858912

tonykonieczny@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

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

gethinjones@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Lansdown Ward

Councillor Roger Harris (Labour) 01873 858143

rogerharris@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Councillor Maggie Harris (Labour) 01873 858143

maggieharris@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Councillor Martyn Groucutt (Labour) 01873 857153

martyngroucutt@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Priory Ward

Councillor Teslin Davies (Labour) 01873 855536

teslindavies@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

Councillor Tudor Thomas (Labour) 01873 840299

tudorthomas@abergavennytowncouncil.gov.uk

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.

A summary of what we do

- 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
- Enhancing and promoting biodiversity
- 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.

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