**ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 26th APRIL 2023 AT 7:00PM ON MS TEAMS & IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM, TOWN HALL, ABERGAVENNY**

**Present:** Cllr T Konieczny (Chair)

Cllr C Holland (Vice Chair)

Cllr P Bowyer

Cllr M Barnes

Cllr K Eldridge

Cllr J George

Cllr G Jones

Cllr D Simcock

**Absent without apologies**

Cllr L Wright

**In attendance**:

S Rosser - Town Clerk

J Davies – Laurie Jones Community Orchard

**Public in attendance**: H Morgan

F Morgan

Public session 6:45pm,

H Morgan addressed Councillors and explained about his planning application submission and how he feels this is a great location, that the town has great tourism links and access – not necessarily for cars. An eco-friendly option, something to be proud of. Simple site, not too ground breaking. Units can be wheeled in, sited, and made good use of.

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| E38/23 | **To receive and approve apologies for absence.**  No apologies received. |
| E39/23 | **To receive declarations of interest for items on the agenda**  No declarations of interest for items on this agenda were received. |
| E40/23 | **To receive and approve the minutes from the last meeting on 29th March 2023.**  Proposed as a true record by Cllr Jones, seconded by Cllr Holland. All present resolved to accept and approve the minutes as a true and accurate record. |
| E41/23 | **To receive a presentation and cooperation agreement proposal from Laurie Jones Community Orchard.**  Cllr Konieczny welcomed Jeff Davies form the Laurie Jones Community Orchard. It was explained that the land was taken over in 2011. The orchard is leased from MCC for 25 years. Effectively the grass was just mown a few times a year. Laurie Jones was looking for an allotment spot, but there was rubble under the ground that stopped this, but it was good for an orchard. It was first planted out in 2012. The intention was to manage with due regard to wildlife and biodiversity. They major on Welsh varieties where possible. To manage the grassland as a Hay Meadow they got involved with Mon Meadows. Gwent Wildlife Trust has done a botanical study in year one as a baseline last year this was carried out again. There was a huge improvement made. They ensure the orchard is open to the public at all times. It is well established as a public immunity. They bring people to the area who are walking through the meadows. Lots are involved with pruning and managing the site. They now have other species growing there are pears, apples, and figs - every year it gets better. There are regular seasonal events. The Wassail was held in February with over 100 people in attendance this year. There was a spring event with pruning sessions and grafting sessions in March, and in summer they will make hay from Meadow grass which will be baled and sold locally. In the autumn there will be the annual apple juicing and pressing which the public can take part in. The orchard has become established as a vibrant scene in Abergavenny. In order to develop the funding requested is for signage, access, and general vegetation management.  Councillor Bowyer said this was a wonderful idea and uses the walk through to the Meadow via the orchard regularly and really appreciates it. Jeff Davis said this wouldn't have happened without Laurie Jones. Councillor Konieczny said it was Laurie’s dream to embed the incredible edible scheme but he passed away before this could happen. Jeff continued that the incredible edible scheme, to grow in any space fruit and vegetable to introduce people to gardening vegetables and fruit, didn't manage to get this off the ground in Abergavenny, but a few spots still exist around the town. The orchard want to develop that idea of growing fruit and veg and encouraging folk to get involved and to pick and use them as part of their new Community Growing Scheme.  Cllr Konieczny explained that whilst we are in the process of replacing and repurposing older planters from around the town this would be an ideal project 2 donate older planters to. These are an ideal height for all abilities to access. The Wales in bloom judges always comment that this is an exemplar of how to do orchards and is one of the best in Wales. John woods contacted ATC to say that RHS were offering a scheme to provide funding for environmental projects for tools and grafting projects. The orchard is the jewel in our crown here in Abergavenny. (Jeff Davies left the meeting at 7:24pm)  Cllr Konieczny explained there is money set aside in the Environmental Groups budget for a total of £5000. £2918 is allocated already to FoCM and FoBP respectively. In this agreement the Orchard have asked for monies in full. At this stage, it would be prudent to ask the Orchard, as a CIC, to evidence their accounts as part of our due diligence. Consider we are not able to give full amount, so need to discuss an alternative.  Cllr Barnes asked how much is available via the RHS grants. Cllr Konieczny explained it is variable depending on the scheme and submissions. Cllr Barnes proposed we delay responding to the request to look at funding sources and finances, then prioritise what they need. Cllr Konieczny explained grant funding is not guaranteed so if we give what we can, then we may want to revise amount allocated in the Environmental groups heading going forward to increase the offer. We can offer £1500 per year at present. Amend the figures then go back to them.  Cllr Jones proposed awarding £1500 per year as part of a Cooperation Agreement, upon receipt of their constitution and accounts. This was seconded by Cllr Bowyer, with all councillors in favour. It was resolved to accept and approve this cooperation agreement as amended. |
| E42/23 | **To receive an update on Abergavenny In Bloom.**  Report was received and noted by Councillors.  Amberol: explained the costs from them for branding were high so a local company had been approached and quoted half the cost. Cllr Konieczny thanked the clerk for investigating this, proposing to look at local suppliers for branding planters, seconded by Cllr Simcock, all agreed.  BiB: judges noted, as well as advice to not offer dinner the night before. Look at hosting a buffet lunch on 31st July after judging has taken place. Clerk and Cllr Konieczny to arrange pick ups and drop offs.  Cllrs noted the judges are likely to walk around the night before so all teams of volunteers will be notified as well as local businesses and those with larger car parks like Morrisons to ensure their areas are as clean and tidy as they can be. |
| E43/23 | **To receive and note an update from the Town Clerk**.  Reported was received and noted. |
| E44/23 | **To receive and note the Service Delivery update.**  Report was received and noted.  Town Team has suffered unforeseen issues due to staff sickness. We pay for a service which is now not being delivered. Operatives get SSP which reduces what MCC then has to pay them. ATC pay in full for the team so we need to flag this with MCC. Wouldn’t be an issue if capacity was there to provide cover. It is incredibly difficult for MCC to deal with. Review the SLA and bring this up asap. |
| E45/23 | **To receive and approve a Finance update on the Environment Budget headings.**  Finance report was received and noted. Proposed as a true record by Cllr Jones, seconded by Cllr Wright, all Councillors approved.  Cllr Barens asked if the water butt scheme could go anywhere else? Cllr Konieczny said if we start with this one, then look at expanding to other suitable locations next year. Proposed to purchase the first to get the scheme off the ground. Proposed by Cllr Konieczny, seconded by Cllr Barnes, all in favour.  Cllr Jones proposed submitting order for Amberol planters as amended, seconded by Cllr Barnes, and all in favour. |
| E46/23 | **To consider and make recommendations regarding the following planning applications.**  23/21886/FUL: Cllr Konieczny said this was a strange application. One that proposes an extension on something that hasn’t been built? Correct procedure is to have an altered application. In terms of proposal, it seems acceptable, but procedure is odd. Cllr Holland said in all his years of planning he’s never heard of an application for an extension on something that’s not yet been built. Went through this with previous submission – BBNPA should view this as an amendment. Cllr Jones asked if we can refuse it on the grounds of process? Cllr Konieczny said technically we can say we are unable to approve on the grounds of proposed extensions on a plan not yet developed and constructed, better considered as fully amended application for main dwelling. Response agreed by Councillors.  23/21898/TPO: Request to remove lower branches for mower access: Cllr Konieczny said in terms of Section 6 of the Environment Act there is no need to mow up to the tree trunk. Leaving this adds significant biodiversity to the site. Cllr Holland pointed out trees 551 – 555 are no longer there. Cllr Konieczny said its astonishing considering the biodiversity crisis and reason for removal is to make mowing easier. Alternative agenda for clearing under trees for ‘access’. On grounds of biodiversity crisis, we cannot condone this. They all have TPOs on them. Recommend refusal with significant biodiversity loss and no mitigations, no need for under trees to be mown. Note fact BBNPA last week commented in the press that biodiversity is likely greater outside the park than in it, so they should bear that in mind. Add note that several trees have already been removed completely. All agreed on response.  DM/2023/00464: Within conservation area. Cantref ward – Cllr Simcock has had no comments at this stage. Cllr Konieczny brought Cllrs attention to the response from NRW. MCC are to determine impact on foul waste as consequence of development – no problem with it, but proposal removes all grass area to construct a garage with a pitch roof, generating excess water going into sewers. No way of draining as its an impermeable surface. Run off goes directly into combined sewer. Could install attenuating tank but nothing comes up in this application. On its own its inconsequential, but if several did this, then in extreme weather events it causes a massive issue. Cllr Simcock asked about a soak away would that work? Cllr Konieczny said this would need sustainable drainage. Approve construction, express concerns with run-off of surface water into combined sewer as no separate sustainable drainage system in place to mitigate this.  DM/2023/00513: Note objection from neighbour. No material considerations in planning terms. Glass conservatory being replaced with structure with smaller windows, at rear of property. Recommend approval.  DM/2023/00528: Set well back from road. No increase in footprint. Raise roof for bedrooms – increased amenity of building. Recommend approval.  DM/2023/00527: On face of building, temporary structure. Recommend approval.  DM/2023/00469: Cllr Konieczny reminded Cllrs the site was put forward in the RLDP as a candidate site. We objected as we considered this worthy of protection as a green wedge. Outside local development plan’s development boundary. Cllr Jones expressed concerns, Highways have concerns on access from Merthyr Road. Attempt to develop temporary accommodation. Soak away – catchments for phosphates and nitrates - the fact we looked previously and refused causes concern. Cllr Barnes agreed. Cllr Holland said the reed bed – something he’s dealt with before – baffled him here as it’s a sloping site so not sue how this would work here. A septic tank would have been recommended, so reservations on the reed bed proposal. Cllr Konieczny said the flood level means its liable to flood, sometimes severely. MCC need to make an assessment on balance of biodiversity on the site, which has arisen from happy neglect. Not been maintained and has run wild, back to nature – this is not in our gift, but MCC have ecologists who can state what net loss may be, and what mitigations would be needed. ATC and MCC have a statutory duty under Section 6 of the Environment Act. There are unanswered questions so we cannot give approval at this stage, we need more guidance on this. Looking to protect the blue and green corridors. Write to MCC to request further investigation to understand feasibility on drainage and biodiversity impact. Response agreed and approved by Councillors. |
| E47/23 | **Report from Town Councillors attendance at external bodies relevant to this Committee:**  **• Abergavenny and District Tourist Association: Cllrs Konieczny & Simcock:** Attended signing of cooperation agreement at a very successful launch event and evening. ADTA have expressed how much this agreement means to them.  **• Abergavenny Food Forum: Cllrs Nicholson & Konieczny:** No meeting/no report.  **• Abergavenny In Bloom: Cllrs Konieczny & Wright:** already received.  **• CCTV user group: Cllrs George & Jones:** No update  **• Friends of Linda Vista Gardens: Cllrs Callard & Simcock** No report  **• Friends of Bailey Park: Cllrs Eldridge & Barnes** No report  **• Friends of Castle Meadows: Cllrs Simcock & Callard:** Cllr Konieczny said they are interested in developing he copse to increase biodiversity and they want to speak to Environment Committee on this as well as MCC Ecologists to see what proposals are fitting for this site. With permission, would like to invite them to next meeting in May. All agreed.  **• Monmouthshire Cc Planning Committee: Cllr Konieczny:** Cllrs Konieczny, Holland and Wright attended the Castle Meadows site visit. Huge amount of progress. Significant development which meets many targets on the climate crisis.  **• Y Fenni Business Community: Cllrs Barnes & Eldridge:** Cllr Konieczny and the Town Clerk were invited to their meeting to speak about AiB and hanging baskets. Very positive response. Special thanks to William Griffiths who has written to all multiples asking for donations as unlikely to have hanging baskets – this will go back into supporting smaller businesses. |
| E48/23 | **Report from County Councillors on matters affecting Abergavenny relevant to this Committee:**  No report received. |
| E49/23 | **Items for consideration at the next meeting Wednesday 24th May 2023.**   * Invite FoCM * Report from FoBP * Update form Greener Abergavenny |

**Meeting ended 8:59pm**

**APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD**

**CHAIR …………………………………… DATE ……………………………**