**ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD**

**24TH MAY 2023 AT 7PM VIA MS TEAMS &**

**IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM, TOWN HALL, ABERGAVENNY.**

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

Cllr P Bowyer

Cllr M Barnes

Cllr K Eldridge

Cllr J George

Cllr C Holland (Vice Chair)

Cllr G Jones

Cllr D Simcock

Cllr L Wright

Cllr G Wilde

**Absent without apologies**

None.

**In attendance**:

S Rosser - Town Clerk

A Fairey and J Shipley – Friends of Castle Meadows

L McCarthy - Press

**Public in attendance:**

Mrs Lee, Mrs Churchill, Charlie, Liz Proctor, Tracey Badham, Jo Webb, Julian Edwards, Cari, Katie, Andy, Jo Waters.

Public session: 6:45pm – 7pm.

Cllr Konieczny thanked al for attending. Request received from Liz Proctor to address ATC. Liz read out the following:

“Castle Meadows was donated to Abergavenny 150 years ago for quiet enjoyment for local residents, a place where:

people can chill, alone or with family, friends and or dogs

people can walk and exercise gently in a beautiful setting

cows can graze and enable people to mix with nature.

In 2013 ActiveTravel was set up to promote easy access for pedestrians, including mobility scooters, for people's mental and physical health and well being. Access for cyclists came after the pedestrians. A fact that seems to have been totally forgotten.

Abergavenny Town Council needs to support and protect our Environment. No regular user wants the Meadows to change and become a dangerous race track. This is what will happen if ActiveTravel’s plans come to fruition. I along with the Friends of the Meadows have been discussing their plans for the last 15 months and failed to get them to change their minds about wanting to install cattle grids at every exit, 9 of them, and 3m wide lit tarmac paths crisscrossing the Meadows. These plans are unsafe as well as being not environmentally friendly. They must be stopped.

Cattle grids are unsafe and a danger to the Environment. A trial grid was installed on Monday 24 April and a small dog, Eva, fell in, broke her neck and died early Friday 28th April. Other dogs have broken legs, a mobility scooter got stuck on the grid as did a cyclist and another cyclist fell off. All within 5 days and there well have been more incidents. Monmouthshire Active Travel were told this would happen but they did not believe me. Wild life fall into cattle grids and die a slow painful death as they can’t get out. Children could also fall into a cattle grid, break bones and or die.

Cattle grids will make the whole Meadows a dangerous place to visit. They will give access to motorbikes, quadbikes and cars etc. These won’t remain on any paths. They will crisscross the Meadows churning up all the grass and wild plants as well as being very dangerous to all other users. When Active Travel were told this they said call the police. When would they arrive, if at all?!

Many people visit the meadows who have disabilities, blind, unable to walk easily, people in mobility scooters or have young children They would not be able to get out of the way of these unwanted users. Monmouthshire Council would be responsible for all accidents as they had installed the cattle grids etc.

Castle Meadows is a unique flood plain and must be looked after. It floods frequently bringing silt etc from the river Usk. This causes grass to grow over the paths which needs clearing every year. However when the water returns to the river it takes stuff with it. The tarmac paths will disintegrate when flooded and so will contaminate not just the Meadows but the river Usk and surrounding areas. This is NOT good environmentally. The present paths are safe environmentally but tarmac is cheaper to install.

None of Active Travel original plans are good environmentally for Castle Meadows and should not be passed.

Please keep Castle Meadows the beautiful safe peaceful place it is. Once it is ruined it will never be the same again.

We need easy access gates for everyone, including mobility scooters, for access at all exits. Maybe double gates that only open onto the Meadows.

A pedestrian bridge by Llanfoist Road bridge is needed but the rest of the scheme should be abandoned. However access to a pedestrian bridge from Llanfoist is not easy safely. Perhaps instead, it could be single lane only over the road bridge, with large pedestrian lane, cycle lane alongside, operated by traffic lights. Traffic from A465 & traffic in & out of Abergavenny would be a problem.

Abergavenny residents and local people need Abergavenny Town Council to protect Castle Meadows from Active Travel, Monmouthshire, unenvironmentally plans. Please keep Castle Meadows the safe peaceful place it is at present. Thank you.”

Cllr Konieczny responded, to help everyone understand ATC’s position and jurisdiction which lies with MCC. An update has been received form Cllr Burch at MCC which was read out to those present. When we are asked, we can host another meeting to allow views to be made known. Important that it is understood that ATC don’t have any powers other than to pass on views. Everyone has opportunity to speak at MCC Planning Committee on request in advance of the meeting, and will be given 5 minutes to speak. Hope that everyone understands that we do all we can with the limited powers we have available to us.

Charlie demanded to know when a date would be announced for a public meeting and how this will be communicated – not just via the MCC website. He also asked if the bridge is permitted, which Cllr Konieczny confirmed has already been approved.

All members of the public that had arrived then requested to leave after this public session ended.

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| E50/23 | **Receive and approve apologies for absence.**  None received. |
| E51/23 | **Receive Declarations of Interest**  Cllr Wright declared an interest in the Castle Street road order as had been consulting locally on the implementation of this. |
| E52/23 | **To receive and approve the minutes from the last meeting on 26th April 2023.**  Cllr Jones proposed that Councillors accept the minutes of the last meeting as a true record, seconded by Cllr Holland. All Councillors resolved to accept these as a true and accurate record. |
| E53/23 | **To receive a report and presentation from Friends of Castle Meadows**  Cllr Konieczny welcomed the representatives from Friends of Castle Meadows. They took Councillors through a power point presentation detailing continued development and how the 3 year project is progressing.  Cllr Wright asked when the concrete dam works are due to be undertaken, and they responded that is scheduled for this year.  In response to the works on bird box building, Cllr Konieczny said this will increase the species on Castle Meadows. Helps to involve young people in the environment. Recommend that ATC engage Kate Stinchcombe from MCC to put together detailed plan for improvements to the copse area, to create a plan and structure it.  FoCM said there will be a ‘Balsam Bash’ in June to remove Himalayan Balsam, and knotweed treatment will take place in the autumn.  Cllr Jones said this was a very high standard of report, wanted clarification on what NNIS stood for – Non-Native Invasive Species.  FoCM said that a licence is needed to inject knotweed stems for removal. MCC does this.  Cllr Wilde asked if FoCM inspect for any tree disease? FoCM said this is part of the programme as all horse chestnut trees are numbered, and they work with MCC on if they find dangerous limbs or disease, so they can log it. Bleeding cancur is one disease they monitor.  Cllr Konieczny thanked the Friends of castle Meadows for their work and report. |
| E54/23 | **To receive and note a report from Friends of Bailey Park.**  The written report form Friends of Bailey Park was received and noted. Cllr Konieczny said it is good to see how they are utilising the funds and their commitment to Abergavenny in Bloom, and their growing volunteer base. Cllr Simcock said its good to see children from Cantref Primary engaging to do bulb planting. Cllr Konieczny said we could look in to buying plug plants next year to let schools grow them on, then when they are ready, put these into a bed in town to display the children’s plants. |
| E55/23 | **To receive an update on Abergavenny In Bloom**  Report was received and noted. Two route walks have been arranged for 31st May and 7th June at 2pm for anyone who would like to join. |
| E56/23 | **To receive and note an update from the Town Clerk.**  Report was received and noted. |
| E57/23 | **To receive and note the Service Delivery update.**  Report was received and noted.  Section 1: MCC Cllr Thomas was arranging for the town team to open the gate at Fairfield car park at the request of Gwent Police.  Section 2: Good to help meet the environmental crisis policy – proposed by Cllr Holland, seconded by Cllr Jones. All in favour.  Section 3: Greenfinch Nurseries report needs further information and a grater breakdown of figures. AiB budget is £30k, and we need to understand what the impact on this will be. Wil this cause an overspend and by how much? Cllrs requested Town Clerk to go back to Greenfinch to ask for further information. Proposed by Cllr Konieczny, seconded by Cllr Barnes, and all approved. Resolved to set up meeting to help understand real costs of service. |
| E58/23 | **To receive and approve a Finance update on the Environment Budget headings.**  Report received and noted. Proposed as a true record by Cllr Wilde, seconded by Cllr Jones, all councillors resolved to receive and accept the finance report. Signed and dated by Cllr Konieczny. |
| E59/23 | **To consider and make recommendations regarding the following planning applications:**  DM/2023/00310: Drawings are attractive, - it is a conservation area, no comments or objections online. Recommend approval.  DM/2023/00677: Extremely important Grade 2 building in Penyfal Ward. It is of extreme architectural interest. Great that owners want to preserve iconic building. Recommend Approval.  DM/2023/00675: C3 to C4 use – House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO). Difficult to accept as only got current drawings and no plans on proposed changes. Cllr Jones visited the site, neighbours are concerned by the application. Nothing in the application to show configuration of the HMO. No consideration for any parking at all. Huge potential for increased vehicles. Nothing on drainage. Not appropriate. Cllr Konieczny suggest this may need to go to MCC Highways as the HMO will increase parking pressures. Serious issues on a corner of a trunk road. Insufficient evidence on how building will work as a HMO. Recommend refusal.  DM/2023/00298: Conservation area, no objections online. Detail is internal, except new French doors. No material objections. Cllr Holland said it is a large dorma on the rear with slate on it. It is big, but on back of property so not in view. Recommend approval. |
| E60/23 | **Notification of a Traffic Regulation Order - Traffic Regulation, Speed Limits and Parking Regulations Consolidation Order 2019 (Amendment Order Number 8) 2023 for:**  • 1988 Castle Stret and Tudor Street: Problems with blue badge holders and delivery vehicles blocking the area. Cllr Wright said employees at the Royal Mail delivery depot had raised concerns on the sight lines leaving the depot. Proposed order accepted and acknowledged.  • 1990 Victoria Street: Proposed order accepted and acknowledged.  • 1991 Fosterville Crescent: Proposed order accepted and acknowledged.  • 1993 Ross Road: Likely to see this in other streets around Abergavenny eventually. Resident Parking may help to alleviate parking issues. Cllr Wilde asked what the cost is for resident parking. Cllr Bowyer said around £70, but this also causes issue as it isn’t a guarantee that you will get a space. Proposed order accepted and acknowledged. |
| E61/23 | **To receive updates from Councillors on relevant items on the Action Plan.**  Cllr Konieczny said new planters were on their way. Note the successful repurposing of existing planters in the community, many for a Community Growing scheme. Being used across a wide spectrum of areas. |
| E62/23 | **Report from Town Councillors attendance at external bodies relevant to this Committee:**  **• Abergavenny and District Tourist Association:** no report.  **• CCTV user group:** next meeting 14/06/23.  **• Friends of Linda Vista Gardens**: no report. Oliver Barton has written to us to mention My Day My Life garden is going to be passed on the judging route which is opposite the entrance to their gardens. May be worth asking MCC if this can be tidied up.  **• Friends of Bailey Park:** no report.  **• Friends of Castle Meadows**: no meeting.  **• Monmouthshire CC Planning Committee:** no meeting.  **• Y Fenni Business Community:** no report. |
| E63/23 | **Report from County Councillors on matters affecting Abergavenny relevant to this Committee.**  Cllr Wright said there has been further discussions on the Place making plans, what may or may not be included. Looking at late June/early July and ATC will be approached for reps. Transforming Towns funds will be allocated by MCC. Look at where money can be spent.  Cllr Konieczny said the amount differs – both £360k and £450k have been quoted as being available. Cllr Konieczny is meeting with Cllr Griffiths on 26th May. Want to bring right stakeholders from a wide cross section from business community, MC and ATC to look at making Abergavenny more resilient and have a more economic future. Advantage if it helps to break down silos and may lead to building a Business resilience Forum which can bid for up to £1milion.Requires full commitment and all parties being on board. Lots of graft will be required from us all at ATC. |
| E64/23 | **Items for consideration at the next meeting Wednesday 28th June 2023**.  Town Clerk said a large number of apologies had already been received so asked if the meeting date can be altered to 21st June. All agreed to this date.  Greener Abergavenny report/update to be listed on agenda. |

**Meeting ended at 8:38pm.**

**APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD**

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