**ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD 7TH JUNE 2023 AT 7:00PM ON MS TEAMS & IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM, TOWN HALL, ABERGAVENNY**

**Present:** Cllr A Wilde (Chair)

Cllr P Bowyer

Cllr M Barnes

Cllr S Burch

Cllr K Eldridge

Cllr M Groucutt

Cllr C Holland

Cllr G Jones

Cllr T Konieczny

Cllr B Nicholson

Cllr M Powell

Cllr D Simcock

Cllr G Wilde

**Absent without apologies.**

None.

**In attendance**:

Sandra Rosser - Town Clerk

Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby – Chair of Monmouthshire County Council

Paul Matthews – Chief Executive Officer of Monmouthshire County Council

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| FC20/23 | **Receive and approve apologies for absence.**  Apologies were received from Cllrs Callard, Wright and George, |
| FC21/23 | **Receive Declarations of Interest for items on the agenda.**  No declarations of interest were received. |
| FC22/23 | **To receive and approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 19th April 2023.**  Minutes for the 19th April 2023 were proposed as a true record by Cllr Konieczny, and seconded by Cllr Jones. It was resolved by all Councillors to accept these as a true record. |
| FC23/23 | **To receive and approve the minutes of the AGM on 10th May 2023.**  Minutes from the AGM on 10th May 2023 were proposed as a true record by Cllr Jones, and seconded by Cllr Konieczny. It was resolved by all Councillors to accept these as a true record. |
| FC24/23 | **To receive a presentation from Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby, Leader of Monmouthshire County Council, and Paul Matthews, CEO for Monmouthshire County Council.**  Cllr A Wilde welcomed both Cllr Brocklesby and Paul Matthews to the meeting. Cllr Brocklesby detailed the reason behind wanting a discussion with the Town Council. Key principles of the Corporate Plan is to work in partnership with stakeholder. Perceptions can be different. Want to forge working relationships, to do the best we can for Abergavenny, to thrive, as this is our place, our home. Same for the whole of Monmouthshire, equality and equity. Climate crisis – protect the environment. Nature crisis – how do we tackle this. Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to follow. We are a mix of Town and County Councillors, with shared goals. Discussion on how that looks. Would like to talk it through.  Paul said it struck him that it has been a while since he visited Abergavenny Town Council. Often reminded that it’s difficult to love something you don’t know. Increasingly important – no room for who’s best, where’s the power – old language. Rich in TCCs in Monmouthshire – over 30. Lots who put themselves forward to serve. Good people wanting to do better things in their community. We’re in the same business but on different scales and scopes. Held view that ATC is a higher functioning TCC in Wales. Sector is uneven, but you’re not. You are ambitious. Platform here is much higher than the baseline. Reasonable to assume we’re not getting much resources but what about resourcefulness? Key network and assets, friendships and trust. Gives the county a better chance. Conditions for more likelihood of success. Meet in places where we are and aspire to be.  Cllr Konieczny said it is heartening to hear the expressed desire to get rid of the hierarchical relationship and move towards more of a parallel. Immediate conversation. We have a Strategy and Action Plan, not aware of MCC’s plan, certain you don’t know ours. Bound to be shared goals. Likely to have projects we can work together on. So many opportunities of joint working. Our powers are limited and some duties are shared. Like to address issues of social deprivation in the town, so want to work with MCC on this.  Cllr Holland said he’d like help for Llanwenarth Citra, he is new to ATC from Llanfoist due to boundary changes. It’s been a long-standing area with many issues and would love to have the opportunity to talk to someone and get some action. Someone who can help. Seconded by Cllr Burch.  Cllr Jones said one reason progress has ben made is thanks to the Clerks the town council has had over the last few years. We rely on communications from MCC officers to the clerk then on to us. How do you see this changing?  Cllr Barnes said generally to get anything from MCC you have to go to the Clerk but with help he has gone directly to officers and now gets replies and action. Please ask officers to respond to Town Councillors if they email them. Hope communications improve. Environment is important and underestimated by many. Things deteriorate fast, particularly food and river state. Looking to see areas of overlap on this issue. Would be good to work together on this. Greener Abergavenny is holding an environment fair on 1st October and they are receiving good support on this. The Town Council can raise money, we have no cap, raising the precept by 10-15% is not noticed, to take on the toilets and street cleaning. Hope this can be utilised.  Cllr Eldridge commented that Paul Matthews had an extensive career in Local Government, so what is his vision to move MCC forward with the new administration?  Cllr Brockelsby responded that in relation to plans – having a 2nd Strategy and Action plan is special, and that it evolves, so its easy to align with the MCC Plan. Place Making will be part of this too. Something that will be in partnership. Chepstow’s plan has just been approved – an exciting initiative to be more inclusive for all corners of society and giving a voice to all. People who are used to being in these types of meetings aren’t the voices we want to hear – need to capture more. Collective working is coming through – no one organisation can fix rivers. Needs to be both from the ground up and top down. Advocate together. Environment – lots care, but equally lots don’t. Abergavenny in Bloom improves the environment and townscape. Lots getting ready for Britain in Bloom No Mow May has helped improve and beautify our county. Refugees are welcome in the town and county. Create a sense of people having a voice, to change the story together. How do we push those in power to hear us all. Build up trust. Communications – need to change relationships. We know this needs to change. It’s two way – this is part of it. Not necessary to have a book with al the numbers of officers in – its information and how it flows, and if you get a reply in 6 weeks and not 6 months. Willing to start two-way communications to call each other out.  Paul recognises that having a town council with a plan is rare. Big Tick. Basis for conversation. Honest conversations will sometimes include No. Its better to know and be honest and clear. Reluctance to say this needs to change. Plans can easily be filled with aspirations. Better conveyors not just service deliverers. Space to walk into different conversations. Become accustomed to hearing No, but understand why. Officer turnover means you may not have direct contact to the MCC officers. 720 town and parish councillors on top of 4 Cabinet Members to consider. High calibre of clerk helps make you an effective organisation. Small inroads give higher chance of success. Of 4000 staff, 1500 are in schools so when trimming down we reflect on the capacity of the right officers. Paul offered to meet with Cllr Holland about issues at Llanwenarth Citra. Right to present picture – job to reorientate the organisation to reflect pictures we all want to see. Always a limit – energy and time. Can find money, limit is not this. It’s how we invest our energy and time. We’ll keep trying. Be candid. Outlook is still uncertain. Communications – not as good as they could be, confront inequality – cause not the symptom. Climate and environment – Corporate Plan – behaviours to change, not to go back to the way it was. MCC wants to understand the population’s behaviour. Encourage folk to lend a little time towards this. Relational Council – build up trust. Be present, deliver commitments. Richness is networks and relationships. Some things we want to see can’t be done tomorrow. Shouting loudly doesn’t make it change. Not robbing Peter to pay Paul. Want to be able to tell you why we’re saying no. Become clearer, we’ll need each other going forward.  Cllr Brocklesby spoke about Social Deprivation – we are the most unequal in Wales and the UK. We have towns, no city. Poverty seen differently here – growing in areas it’s not been seen before. Central for inequality impact assessments. Talking to Welsh Government on rural poverty and how to recognise it needs a different way of working. House to house, grief and suffering – up to 1/3 are living in poverty.  Paul said he brings people to Abergavenny from all over – very rare people don’t go Wow. From the high base line you want more. County Councillors will need to be more plural, so has to be a consideration. One reason is the high investment over the last decade. Probably capped now. Other areas have lost out due to this. Want to start with what’s strong. This is a strength, and that is key. Town Council need to amplify what is good. Want to hear more about what a bobby dazzler it is!  Cllr Konieczny asked would MCC consider partnership with a town council on prudential borrowing for a major project? A social housing joint project for instance? Paul said yes they would. As a co-funder and sponsor, knowing it will mean a 20 year commitment on a precept.  Cllr Powell said rivers have ben affected by agriculture as well as housing – sewage has not been improved. Needs to change as still at same level as 50 years ago. This would solve the issues. Cllr Brocklesby responded saying hat sadly it is more to do with agriculture with current issues.  Cllr A Wilde thanked both Cllr Brocklesby and Paul Matthews for coming along to our meeting, and for starting the discussion. We look forward to more dialogue going forward. |
| FC25/23 | **To receive reports from Councillors attendance at external bodies which are relevant to Full Council:**  **• Armed Forces Champion: Cllr M Powell & Cllr T Konieczny**  **• Governor of Cantref School: Cllr B Callard**  **• Governor of Deri View Primary School: Cllr G Jones**  **• Governor of King Henry VIII School: Cllr B Nicholson/Cllr M Groucutt**  **• Governor of Our Lady & St Michael School: Cllr T Konieczny:** Celebrated 150 years with a celebratory mass. Progressing with input to Wales in Bloom with their individual entry.  **• Governor of Ysgol Y Fenni: Cllr G Jones**  **• Temporary Board of Governors King Henry VIII School: Cllr Eldridge** : New school uniform proposals emergency meeting. Petition asking for phased change. Compromise due to public pressure.  **• King Henry VIII Foundation: Cllr B Nicholson and Cllr B Callard**  **• North Monmouthshire Area Committee: Mayor and Town Clerk**  **• North Monmouthshire Liaison Committee: Mayor and Town Clerk** |
| FC26/23 | **To receive reports from County Councillors on matters affecting Abergavenny relevant to Full Council.**  Cllr Groucutt said the consultation on transport to school ends soon. |
| FC27/23 | **To consider items for the agenda of the next Full Council Meeting to be held on 13th September 2023.**  Email all suggestions and requests to the Town Clerk. |

**Meeting ended 7:53pm**

**APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD**

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