**ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 8TH NOVEMBER 2023 AT 7:00PM ON MS TEAMS & IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM,**

**TOWN HALL, ABERGAVENNY**

**Present:** Cllr M Barnes (Vice Chair)

Cllr B Callard

Cllr K Eldridge

Cllr J George

Cllr M Groucutt

Cllr C Holland

Cllr G Jones

Cllr M Powell

Cllr D Simcock

Cllr A Wilde

Cllr G Wilde

**Absent without apologies:** None.

**In attendance**:

Sandra Rosser – Principal Officer

Jay Shipley – Deputy Principal Officer

Zoe Morris and Tylar Harrison-Jones – The Media Agency

**Public:** 3 in attendance

Meeting chaired by Cllr Barnes in the absence of Cllr Bowyer.

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| PR124/23 | **Receive and approve apologies for absence.**  Apologies were received from Cllrs Bowyer, Brocklesby, Burch, Nicholson and wright, and it was resolved to accept their apologies for absence. |
| PR125/23 | **Receive Declarations of Interest for items on the agenda.**  No declarations of interest were received. |
| PR126/23 | **To approve the minutes from 11th October 2023.**  Minutes proposed as a true record by Cllr Holland, and seconded by Cllr Jones. All councillors present resolved to accept the minutes as a true record. |
| PR127/23 | **To receive a report and presentation from Zoe Morris and Tylar Harrison-Jones from The Media Agency on the social media trial, and receive a recommendation on moving forward with social media and website support**.  Cllr Barnes welcomed Zoe and Tylar to the meeting. The team have been managing the social media accounts for the Town Council for 3 months, and have now collected the Meta performance data from 1st August to 8th November 2023. Instagram has seen a 100% increase , Facebook has had a significant jump in followers. Of the 61 static images shared, 43 created engagement opportunities, where 13 videos created 72 engagement opportunities, showing that video content outperforms static posts. The engagement has been high over the 90 days showing lots of traction – people are keen to know who you are. Audiences: Instagram has higher number 18-24, whereas on Facebook he 25 – 34 is increasing. Predominantly these people are from the Abergavenny area.  Looking forward, benchmarking against similar sized councils would be sensible. Looking at Brecon and Penarth. Both have longer established sites (from 2016) where Abergavenny’s started in 2020. Keeping up with content input will help these figures to all increase.  Visits to the Facebook pages are up 400% with lots taking time to look at content. This is all organic – no paid adverts. The Christmas Lights post lead to 520 clicks to the website which is very good engagement. Impressions are numbers of people who look multiple times. Using latest news stories/press releases with a link helps take traffic to the website. Very promising figures.  Cllr Groucutt said these figures were fantastic, and justifies the confidence and faith in the service being provided. As Abergavenny is a go-to destination is there any way to delineate the type of material between the home and visitor base. Zoe responded that the Food Festival weekend could be used to allow other voices to be featured on the website and social medias sites. Cllr Groucutt would like to see visitor attractions that link in to Abergavenny on here. Disappointed to see a drop in tourism figures this year so it would be great to help if we can. Zoe said Visit Wales has a similar footprint but we may need to keep a view that this is a council website and social media platforms, but no reason why areas couldn’t be ‘handed over’ to other groups like local charities. This can be neutral and unbiased. What makes the town great. Cllr Jones said its been really encouraging, fantastic to see the traffic we’re getting. Proud to be supporting various charities, and we’re keen to help get their message across. Asking about options, Zoe responded that video content would be good for the council and others for better ‘access to market’ which we could allow charities to use. Original quote was for £1500 per month for 4 videos plus news content and static posts (30 hours work). Cllr G Wilde commented that its not always about the quality of the pictures and videos, it is more about the engagement with the public. Zoe responded that this gives the council the tools for engagement. Cllr G Wilde has concerns on the website and video content needing to be more targeted – need to know what we want to achieve – worries that we’ll simply say that we’re just raising awareness.  Cllr Barnes said that its a lot of money to commit in tough times, if people only see videos for £18k per year. We need a purpose and aim for doing this. More detail. Some can be very detailed and very useful. Poverty is increasing at an alarming rate so it’s a tough call. Monmouthshire County Council have started cutting services already and if people see we’re spending money on such a thing we need to be clear on how we structure it and how this will work.  Zoe said that flexibility is key and you can be direct with targeted campaigns. Narrative, strategy and what to deliver are all important. Cllr A Wilde asked about widening the reach – can we link into events going on around the town? Brecon’s engagement and reach wasn’t as high as expected. Cllr George asked if on the tourism front it may be possible to link up a live webcam or livestream as they do in other tourist destinations? Zoe said this could be possible but needs to check GDPR and how this can be hosted via the website. Cllr Barnes thanked The Media Agency for their continued good work both online and on the website.  Cllr A Wilde asked about how we review this going forward. The Principal Officer advised that a tender process needs to follow for the amount that needs to be covered which will allow us to be more detailed on what content we want to see going out from us as a Town Council.  Cllr G Wilde spoke about a content management system and website issues. These all need to be completed. A working group was proposed with Cllrs Jones, Nicholson, G Wilde and George to be part of this, and for other Councillors not present to be asked if they wish to participate. |
| PR128/23 | **Finance: (a) To receive Month 7 Reconciliation Report:** Proposed as an accurate record by Cllr Holland, seconded by Cllr Jones, approved by all present.  **(b) To receive Month 7 cashbook report:** Discussion around EMR transfers and where this currently stands. Query over amount paid to Tech Wales and what it is for – RFO explained this is for ongoing Microsoft 365 support and packages used by all members of the Twon Council.Proposed as an accurate record by Cllr Holland, seconded by Cllr Jones, approved by all present.  **( c ) To receive Month 7 bank statements:** Proposed as an accurate record by Cllr Holland, seconded by Cllr Jones, approved by all present.  **(d) To receive the interim audit report from Auditing Solutions Ltd:** Cllr G Wilde said the conclusions and recommendations related mainly to the website being updated so we don’t fail audit. Cllr Barnes aske dhow we can work together to improve the finance reports. Cllr Groucutt said overall the comments and conclusions made us aware of future strategic objectives but no changes are needed as part of the review. Focus on driving vision and thanks to officers for what they do. Cllr Barnes said recommendations were most specific about putting reserves into other accounts. Many other local authorities now pay into other banks. The whole financial system is not as secure as it was. Can we investigate CCLA funds. It seems commendable, and we can invest sustainably. Used by many churches and local authorities to hold money, particularly reserves. Cllr Simcock asked what CCLA are – Cllr Barnes explained they are a equity trust fund. Spread across several accounts. Very safe and gives a good return. Cllr Groucutt said it would be sensible for this to be considered by Full Council and proposed for a report to be brough to the next meeting, seconded by Cllr Callard who said Monmouthshire County Council hold the CCLA in high regard. All councillors agreed to this proposal for officers to bring a report on the CCLA to the next Full Council meeting on 17th January 2024.  **( e) To receive and consider the Cooperation Agreement from Black Mountain Jazz:** Amend 4.1 to show £4000 per year for three years. Amend 4.2 – remove the words “Therefore . . . . agreement”. Cllr Groucutt congratulated the Principal Officer on helping the group to complete this agreement. Can be looked at as a good example for others going forward. Part of the promotion of Abergavenny as a centre for the arts. The Black Mountain Jazz group now has a sell out club where well known artists travel from miles around to stay and support. Cllr G Wilde said the development of young people is commendable. Would like more detail around engagement with schools, which ones and the age groups. Add this to Annex three under performance measures. Cllr Jones said the previous arrangement meant reports weren’t great so this needs to be clear at each annual review and has to have more detail for better scrutiny. Include figures, money and engagement levels. Cllr Eldridge said we need to make sure public money is spent wisely and safely.  Agreement after amendments proposed to be accepted by Cllr G Wile, seconded by Cllr Jones, and resolved to be accepted and approved by all Councillors present.  **(f) To receive and consider a grant application from Llanwenarth Village Hall.** Cllr Holland said Llanfoist Community Council used to support the hall a lot before the ward transferred after the boundary review to Abergavenny. It is the only facility in the ward which is well used by the whole community all of the time. Happy to see they have raised such a large portion of the funds for a worthwhile cause. Cllr G Wilde raised concerns that if every community group wanted to do this would we be able to cope? It is great to see it is 90% funded already.  Proposed by Cllr Jones to approve the grant application for £1000, seconded by Cllr A Wilde, and resolved and approved by all Councillors present. |
| PR129/23 | **To receive and note the Principal Officer’s update.**  Verbal report received – Principal Officer has now completed the ILCA qualification (Introduction to Local Council Administration). Arrangements for the Remembrance Parade and Christmas Light Switch On events over the next two weekends were taking up a lot of time but going well. |
| PR130/23 | **To receive updates from Councillors on the Strategy and Action Plan.**  Updated version to be re-circulated. Cllr Jones said both Environment and People and Communities now list the various interventions in order to make it easier to provide summary updates. May be worth considering for this committee, to break it down and make it easier for all to see. |
| PR131/23 | **To nominate a representative for One Voice Wales and to receive reports from Councillors attendance at external bodies which are relevant to this Committee:**  Cllr Bowyer was nominated as the replacement representative for One Voice Wales meetings alongside Cllr Simcock.  **• Borough Theatre MCC / ATC Collaboration – Cllr Groucutt –** none received.  **• Melville CftA CIC Board – Cllrs Barnes and Eldridge:** Cllr Barnes had provided a written report which had been circulated. Meeting set to meet with Trustees to discuss financial statement and consider future arrangements.  **• One Voice Wales: Cllr D Simcock –** report circulated to Councillors from Cllr Simcock and the Principal Officer form the last online Newport and Monmouthshire meeting.  **• Abergavenny Citizens Advice Bureau – Cllr M Barnes and Cllr D Simcock:** both Cllrs G Wilde and Barnes are now trustees, and Cllr Simcock is unable to attend meetings. New rep requested. Cllr G Wilde said meetings are a Monday evening at Usk between 6pm – 9pm. Very good and informative. Cllr Eldridge would like to be considered. Cllr Groucutt proposed leaving the decision until the next Policy And resources Meeting so absent councillors can be considered as well. Seconded by Cllr Jones. New Observer and Deputy to be considered (Cllr A Wilde and Cllr K Eldridge). |
| PR132/23 | **To receive reports from County Councillors on matters affecting Abergavenny relevant to Policy and Resources Committee.**  Cllr Powell said planning site visits had been conducted on Monday at Brecon Road and Swan Meadow.  Cllr Groucutt advised Cllr Brocklesby will be off for a month as she recovers form a hip operation. Updated that My Day My Life were now working with local group “The Gathering” for positive working solutions. Possibly the Wellbeing Centre at the bus station pending improvements at the Melville centre.  Cllr Callard in response to a query from Cllr Eldridge on what cuts may have an effect on Abergavenny Town Council said these are all still being formulated. The town council raises its own precept so is in charge of its own income. Only affect will be on shared services – what the town council values and Monmouthshire County Council can no longer sustain. Early January 20204 will see consultation on their draft budget. |
| PR133/23 | **To consider items for the next meeting on 13th December 2023.**   * Citizens Advice presentation |

**Meeting ended 8:37pm**

**APPROVED AS A TRUE RECORD**

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