

**MEETING OF THE PLANNING, COMMERCE AND ENVIRONMENT (PlaCE) COMMITTEE  
OF ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH COMMUNITY COUNCIL HELD ON 02 December  
2024 AT 6.00 PM at the Council Offices, Mitre Street, Abertillery.**

**PRESENT**

**Councillors:** Barrie Page (Chair), Peter Adamson, Ralph Henderson (MBE), Chris Hill, Mark Lewis, Rob Phillips, Josh Rawcliffe, Nick Simmons.

**Officers:** Steve Edwards (Clerk) and Erika Davies (Deputy Clerk).

**Apologies:** None.

**Absent:** None.

**Others:** Neil Hirst, TAFY. Matthew Thomas and Darren Britton, Abertillery Excelsiors.

**59. Apologies for Absence**

None.

**60. Declarations of Interest or Dispensations**

None.

**61. Minutes – 14 October 2024**

The Committee **RESOLVED** that the minutes were a true and correct record.

**62. Town in Bloom**

The Committee received a verbal and written report from Neil Hirst, general manager at TAFY. Neil gave an overview of the work that had been completed over the spring and summer months. The team are almost finished planting over 6000 bulbs and plants for winter and spring displays. Hanging baskets have now been removed and stored for the winter months (with the exception of 6 next to the Institute which have been missed and will be collected in the next few days).

Neil explained that now is a good time to purchase additional tubs if required as they are cheaper at this time of year. The committee agreed this would be a good idea but on the advice of the Clerk, they need to wait until the new budget is agreed in January. If the new budget proposal is approved, TAFY will purchase the tubs and store at their unit until we can pay for them and use them in the next financial year.

Cllr. Chris Hill asked if it's possible to source alternative styles of planters. Officers will liaise with TAFY about the options and prices of what is available.

Cllr. Ralph Henderson informed Neil of our intention to enter Wales in Bloom 2025 and asked if TAFY would be willing to meet and discuss ways to help. Neil agreed to this.

Cllr. Peter Adamson asked if TAFY had any volunteers working with them for our Town in Bloom project. Neil confirmed that he'd had quite a lot of help from local people who had volunteered their time to help. Two of the volunteers, Liam and Paul, have learnt transferrable skills through their time volunteering and have now been offered paid employment as a result. Cllr Adamson also asked if TAFY would dispose of the metal tub bands if they saw them. There is currently one on the tub outside the old police station in Abertillery.

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The Committee **RESOLVED** to move two tubs in Swffryd that continue to be vandalised, from their current location on the main road by bus stops, to land in Gordan Avenue. Officers will liaise with TAFY to get these moved.

### 63. Jim Owen Pavilion

The Committee received a presentation from Matthew Thomas, secretary of Abertillery Excelsiors AFC and Darren Britton Chair of Abertillery Excelsiors AFC. The purpose of the presentation was to show the Council its plans for an expansion at the Jim Owen pavilion. The main points included: -

- The current building is not energy efficient. The boiler is approximately 30 years old and the roof is in a bad state of disrepair.
- The aim is to build a cost effective and sustainable building with long term growth and employment opportunities and also to grow the men's and women's game in line with FAW regulations.
- The purpose of the new building would be to have a community hub, not just for the use of football but also community groups, weddings and other such events. Groups such as the local mountain biking team would be able to use the toilets and showers.
- Plans for the expansion have been drawn up by an architect firm in Cardiff. Application for funding will be submitted to the FAW in January.
- There are limits on what can be achieved in terms of size of the expansion as the FAW has guidelines on what must be available in the space. i.e. adequate parking within the grounds.
- Cambrian and Clydach FC were used as an example of a club that has started a CIC (Community Interest Company) and is very successful. The plan is to use the same model for Abertillery Excelsiors in the future.

Cllr. Nick Simmons asked what the purpose of the presentation was. Matthew confirmed that it is to let the Council know what is happening and what their plans are for the future of the pavilion. This is to ensure members of the public will have the correct information if councillors are approached on the matter.

Cllr. Josh Rawcliffe asked if eco-tourism would feature in the new plans. Darren said glamping pods had been considered in the past but at present this didn't look viable as there are restrictions on space due to the on-site parking requirements.

Cllr. Ralph Henderson asked if the new space would have a bar as this can be a good source of revenue. Darren confirmed that this won't be a main focus at the start but certainly something that they will consider going forward.

Cllr. Chris Hill encouraged Matthew and Darren to promote the local area and tourism in their plans and applications going forward as he feels this will draw a lot of people to the area and make a positive impact.

The Committee also questioned the impact of the recent inclement weather and the sink hole that appeared in the field. Matthew, a civil engineer, said it is his understanding that it is the main culvert (corrugated and not encased in concrete) that has collapsed

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causing the damage. This also happened in 2020. This will need to be repaired/replaced.

#### **64. Planning**

Cllr. Peter Adamson questioned the recent planning application from Pennant Walters Ltd. Concerning the Mynydd Carn y Cefn wind farm on land to the west of Abertillery. Local residents have voiced their concerns to him over the stability of the ground which will house up to 8 wind turbines. Cllr. Adamson is going to investigate the planning application in further detail and write to the planning officer at BGCBC to note the concerns.

#### **65. Wales in Bloom**

Cllr. Ralph Henderson gave an update on his plans to enter Wales in Bloom 2025. The proposed sites and location leads for the displays are as follows: -

- Llanhilleth Institute Cllr Page & Lyn Maloney
- Six Bells Guardian Cllr. Lucy Harmer and Six Bells School
- Abertillery War Memorial – Need confirmation from the Leisure & Tourism committee
- Six Bells Park – Cllrs. Hill and Rawcliffe
- Foundry Square – Ffrindiau Tyleri
- Abertillery Arcade/St. Michael's Church and Jubilee Square – Abertillery Aspirations
- Institute Gardens – Need to speak with BGCBC
- Abertillery Underpass - BGCBC
- Abertillery Learning Community – Tracey Jarvis
- Gelli Crug Park and allotments - TBC
- Abertillery Park – Richard Cook
- Caffi Tyleri – Cllr. Lewis and Ralph Connor

A working group will be set up to confirm who is helping at each location. Cllr. Henderson has suggested schools have a 'bring a plant to school' day so that all the local children can get involved. He will also speak with TAFY to see how they can help as they already work with us as part of our Town in Bloom project.

Officers will speak to BGCBC about the land at the side of Abertillery Institute to see if anything can be done with regards to planters and/or planting.

The Committee would like to invite the Trustees of the Institute to the next meeting. Officers will email them once a meeting date has been confirmed.

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#### 66. Biodiversity Leaflet

The Committee were very happy with the proposed biodiversity leaflet. Deputy Clerk, Erika Davies, explained that it had been produced with advice from Nadine Morgan, Ecologist at BGCBC, TAFY and Rachel Carter, Nature Officer at One Voice Wales.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to accept the leaflet and for it to be sent to the Town in Bloom community involvement partners. Now that it is approved, it will be used as an example of best practice by One Voice Wales.

#### 67. Car Scheme Update

The scheme has currently spent £364 of their allocated £1000 budget on subsidising trips for the residents of ALCC. The scheme is unable to progress further due to the shortfall in the number of volunteer drivers. Cllr. Chris Hill suggested paying drivers to the trips but this would negate the roll of being a volunteer and it would also affect their car insurance. Cllr. Nick Simmons asked for information on the number of volunteer drivers registered in the ALCC area and how the figures compare with other towns that are part of the scheme. Officers will contact Bridges Community Car Scheme.

#### 68. Defibrillator Training

The Committee **RESOLVED** for officers to look at free defibrillator training in the area. Cllr. Josh Rawcliffe suggested GAVO as they provide it as long as there is an available space and sufficient numbers.

#### 69. Transport Policy for Wales

Cllr. Chris Hill gave an update on the webinar he attended on 25<sup>th</sup> November.

- 41 delegates attended with approximately 8 speakers.
- There were discussions around eco friendly modes of transport and sustainable travel systems in Wales. For example, Cardiff has around 45% of electric buses.
- Using ONS data, Cllr. Hill explained that there are 10 million passengers per annum using the valley train lines from Cardiff Central station yet Abertillery does not have a station. The WAG Rail Strategy and Policy Director, Chris Warner, was asked why Abertillery wasn't shown on the Metro map but was shown on the Gateway Rail development group plans. He was not able to answer during the meeting but said he would get back to Cllr. Hill. Cllr. Hill has yet to receive a response and will contact Chris Warner to chase this up.
- Cllr. Hill participated in the Q&A session throughout asking about the issues in installing electric charging points in households in the valleys and also pointed out that people prefer to commute an optimum 20-25 miles to and from work. Having a train station in Abertillery would help with this.

The Committee **RESOLVED** for officers to check if a transcript of the webinar is available and if so, at what cost.

#### 70. Energy Learning Network

Cllr. Barrie Page gave a verbal update on the webinar he attended on 13<sup>th</sup> November. This was the initial session with a further 6 to come. The aim is for attendees to learn how to deliver energy saving to the local community. The main beneficiaries would be welfare centres, community halls and churches where buildings are usually inefficient and energy costs are high.

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Cllr. Page will lead on the project with Cllrs. Henderson and Adamson to assist. The first objective is to complete a community mapping activity and submit prior to the next session on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February (10-11:30am).

**71. Abertillery Underpass Mosaic**

Cllr. Barrie Page gave a verbal update on the Steering Group for the Underpass mosaic in Abertillery. The project to repair the mosaic is underway. It is being completed in different stages. The underside will be completed first. The artist is meeting with the group this week. There are discussions about whether or not to cover the mosaic with Perspex or aluminium so that it keeps dry and safe from harm. However, there is concern that the Perspex will be a fire risk as fires are being lit in the underpass, or that the aluminium will be damaged and removed. Cllr. Hill asked if there's an option for CCTV (there is CCTV in the police building opposite) and censored lighting. Cllr. Rob Phillips highlighted that the underpass is already lit 24/7.

**72. Date of Next Meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.02pm

These minutes were produced by Erika Davies (Deputy Clerk).

Signed as a correct record by the Chair:.....

Dated:.....