

NEWENT TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Newent Town Council held on Monday 23 November 2015 at the Market House, Newent at 7.00 pm.

Present: Cllr E Wood (Mayor), Cllr D Blick, Cllr J Celino, Cllr R Beard, Cllr Mrs K Draper, Cllr Mrs P Celino, Cllr Mrs S Marcovecchio, Cllr Mrs J Davies, Cllr Mrs M Duncan, Cllr Miss M Shere, Cllr Mrs C Howley, Cllr C Thomas, Cllr E Heathfield

Apologies – None

Also Present – District Cllr L Lawton

14.00 PC R Mortimer Gloucestershire Police was in attendance to discuss local policing issues.

The Mayor welcomed PC Rob Mortimer to the meeting. PC Mortimer advised of local crime figure reported incidents during the last six months compared with that of the same period last year as follows:-

	Last Year	This Year
Violence	20	27
Sex Offences	8	4
Burglaries	13	31
Theft/fraud	39	49
Criminal damage	17	26
Drugs	3	5
	<u>100</u>	<u>142</u>
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PC Mortimer went on to advise he was conscious of complaints received of anti-social behaviour at the Recreation Ground where after dark, vehicles had entered the area and occupants played loud music and there was also evidence of drug taking. He suggested the Council might consider erecting a barrier across the entrance to the Recreation Ground preventing such vehicles accessing the area, but added that he realised the area was in frequent use by other vehicles - the Rugby Club and parents dropping children off, and that consideration would need to be given as to how this could be managed.

PC Mortimer went on to advise the geography of the area he police and that this was from the A40 up to the north of the county. There were approximately 50 parishes in the area, 20 of which he had involvement.

Cllr Celino asked if the crime figures had increased because this was reported crime, given the encouragement the public were given to do so? He asked if the Police had any posters that could highlight the need to do this? PC Mortimer said he would look into this.

Cllr Mrs Marcovecchio reported a very recent response which was considered poor and inappropriate when made to the 101 Police telephone number concerning a stray dog.

PC Mortimer advised of problems with the 101 number and of the time it sometimes took to get a response. Cllr Celino by contrast advised that when reporting an attempted burglary he had received a response from 101 within five minutes advising that a police presence was on its way. The Police had been very thorough and had made contact by phone on three occasions since.

In the absence of further questions, the Mayor thanked PC Mortimer for attending the meeting.

14.1 Business

14.1.2 Planning applications – see attached

14.1.3 Christmas lights – switch-on event - contingency expenditure

A request was made for a contingency allowance to be made available in the sum of £500 in excess of the budgeted sum. Additional lights to those already in use had been made from the budget due to them being discontinued in the future and this had led to funding being depleted. It was however, stressed that if promised sponsorship for the event materialised, the additional £500 would not be required.

Cllr Blick proposed approval of a £500 overspend to be taken from reserves for this purpose which was seconded by Cllr Beard and unanimously agreed.

14.1.4 Estate Supervisor's work report

The Estate Supervisor was questioned as to when he might undertake the revetment work at the Lake to which he advised this would be done in January, weather permitting.

Cllr Blick reminded the Estates Supervisor of the need for the workforce to be wearing the appropriate protective clothing and referred to a situation where plant was being used in a public area and this had not been the case. The Estates Supervisor apologised for the oversight on this occasion but clarified that they did wear protective clothing whenever the risk assessment for the job in hand called for appropriate protective clothing to be worn.

The Estates Supervisor went on to report on the progress of the erection of the Christmas lighting in the town. Cllr Celino queried the budget for the Christmas lights switch-on event and felt that it was important that staffing labour costs involved in the erection of the lights should be included in the overall budget costing.

14.1.5 To give consideration to Office equipment/additional electrical sockets in Council Office

Cllr Wood reported that the Council's temporary office accommodation was inadequate in terms of the provision of electrical sockets and currently most equipment ran off numerous

extension leads which was considered inappropriate and possibly dangerous in terms of overloading. He proposed that immediate attention be given to the installation of additional sockets. Cllr Wood further proposed that another computer be purchased for the Office in view of the new Clerk's imminent appointment and that all computers should be networked and with suitable back up. Funding for computer and associated works could be found from budget within earmarked reserves. Cllr Wood proposed that he and the Deputy Mayor be given delegated powers with the Clerk to take this matter forward. This was agreed by 12 votes in favour, 1 abstention.

14.1.6 Banking arrangements – staffing signatories on account

Following the appointment of the new Clerk it was unanimously agreed that the signatories on the Council's bank accounts would be Miss Katherine Noble OR Mrs Dierdre Morley PLUS two Council Members

14.1.7 Report on meeting with Rugby Club

Cllr Mrs Howley reported that a meeting had taken place recently with the Rugby Club to which she and other Members had attended. She reported the Club was in need of storage space and would ideally like a 20' x 8' container to cater for the needs of the numerous teams that were now playing on the Recreation Ground and a suitable position for siting of such had been identified on the site of the recently demolished toilet block adjacent to the Changing rooms building. Evidence of the need for storage was confirmed on inspection of the Changing rooms where inappropriate storage was currently being made due to lack of provision for such anywhere else.

It was agreed that the Rugby Club would need to liaise with the District Council regarding the siting of such a container on the land of the former toilet block. The Estates Foreman advised that it would be sensible to ensure any container be sited tight against the hedge to prevent anti-social behaviour taking place in any area left between.

Cllr Wood requested the Estates Supervisor to obtain prices to lay a stone path between the Changing rooms building and the portacabin which was currently very muddy and also to dig out an area in front of the changing rooms to ease access for the storage of the scrumming machine. This was agreed.

Further discussion took place on the Rugby Club's lack of progress in discussion with the Community School regarding the negotiating of a lease to use the sporting facilities of the School. It was understood the Governors of the School were not aware of the Rugby Club's position and Cllr Wood felt that it was time the Governors were made fully aware of the situation.

Cllr Celino asked if the District Council owned any land locally that the Rugby Club could rent? District Cllr Lawton who was present at the meeting was asked to comment. He advised that the District Council owned a piece of land – designated as recreational land at the far end of town at the bottom of Meek Road which the Rugby Club had originally shown interest in relocating to. Cllr Lawton advised that the land was however designated

recreational land for the community, and whilst the Rugby Club formed part of the community the land could not be allocated to them exclusively.

14.1.8 To give consideration to monthly budget

The monthly budget figures were not approved until further clarification and amendment had been made to the allocation of funding to particular budget headings.

14.1.9 Any Other Business

1. Cllr Blick reported what he believed to be an unsatisfactory standard of street cleaning in the town and gave by way of example, a build up of leaves/detritus in the Market Square and pigeon mess at the bottom of Culver Street. He stated that the standard of street cleaning currently being undertaken fell far short of that required in a Zone 1 area. Whilst it was initially considered appropriate to request representatives from the District Council to meet with the Town Council on site to discuss this, it was ultimately and finally agreed to request that attention be given to the Town Council's view that the street cleaning contract was not being adhered to the level of that required in a Zone 1 area.

2. Integrated Transport Unit – Funded Public Transport Consultation Evening Events

Advise the County Council is seeking views on how it priorities funding available for public transport. Engagement evenings will be held across the country – in Newent at the Memorial Hall on Thursday 3rd December 18.30-20.30.

It was agreed that Cllrs Heathfield, J & P Celino would attend.

3. Forest of Dean District Council - University of Gloucestershire Town Study – Student Seminar invitation

Advise the District Council has been working with the Growth Hub and the University of Gloucestershire to gain views from local businesses about their towns. The survey aims to identify the deficits, needs and aspirations in and around each town centre, with the final report counting towards their coursework for the year. The students will be informally presenting their findings to tutors in early December through a series of seminars, as such an invitation is extended to attend the seminar relevant to Newent on Wed 9 Dec at 11.15 am at the University of Gloucestershire Park Campus in Cheltenham.

Cllr Beard expressed an interest in attending and advised he would confirm at a later date.

This concluded the business of the meeting and it was declared closed at 8.30 pm.