

## NEWENT TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Newent Town Council's Annual Assembly held on Monday 20 March 2017 at Sheppard House, Onslow Road, Newent at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors E Wood (Mayor), Mrs J Davies, Mrs K Draper, Mrs S Marcovecchio, Mrs M Duncan, Miss M Shere, Mrs C Howley, C Thomas, E Heathfield, G Moseley and V Vesma

Also present – The Clerk and 9 members of the public

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The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 1. Apologies – Cllr Beard

Councillors introduced themselves.

### 2. Approval of Minutes of the Annual Assembly meeting on 21 March 2016

**Resolved:** To approve the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 March 2016. **Record of Voting:** All in favour.

### 3. Matters Arising

A resident requested an update with regards to the office accommodation.

Two options are still being considered, moving back to The Lodge or a new build. Cllr Wood stated that the Council had appointed an architect to produce drawings for alterations to The Lodge. A public consultation will take place once all the information is available.

The lack of parking provision at the arboretum was raised. Cllrs Mrs Marcovecchio and Mrs Howley agreed to attend a site visit.

### 4. To receive the Town Council's Report for 2016/17 by the Town Mayor

Cllr Wood read out the following report;

“The Council has reviewed and responded to 85 planning applications.

Promotions;

In May 2016, the Council's new website was launched and had over 27,000 hits that month.

New town leaflets were distributed during the year.

To encourage visitors to the town, the Council advertised in the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Days Out Guide and Coach Drivers' Yearbook.

Later this month a Town Tour App will go live, to help encourage visitors to the town. Thanks to the work of Cllrs Beard, Thomas and Miss Shere.

#### Grants/Funding;

A £5,000 grant was awarded to the Council by the Gloucestershire Environmental Trust, for a Jubilee Wildlife Walk area which has been implemented by Cllr Mrs Howley. The project has been extremely well supported by various businesses and organisations.

A grant for nearly £4,200 was awarded by the Angling Trust for the replacement of the fishing platforms at the Lake, which were completed in February 2017.

Cllr Heathfield, with the support of Cllr Beard, secured £1,000 of Christmas lights by coming runner up in a national Christmas lights competition.

#### Administration;

Numerous Council policies have been reviewed, updated and created over the past year. The Cemetery Rules and Regulations and Allotment Tenancy Agreements have also been updated.

Cllr Heathfield has set up a Youth Advisory Group, to encourage younger people to engage with the Council.

We are continually working with our colleagues at Forest of Dean District Council and Gloucestershire County Council on behalf of residents.

A strategic plan was approved, which is regularly reviewed.

#### Events;

A hugely successful Christmas lights event took place in November. I would like to thank the Christmas Lights Committee and Cllr Mrs Draper as Chairman and Edwina from Sweet Memories for all the fundraising.

The Council had two stalls at last year's Onion Fayre.

A Dementia Awareness Briefing took place on 7<sup>th</sup> March, which was supported by Lena Maller from the Forest of Dean District Council. I would like to thank Cllr Vesma and the working group for organising the event.

The Council has supported many events by allowing the use of the Lake area and the Market House e.g. The Big Lunch, Onion Fayre, Brass Band Concerts, Freedom Leisure children's orienteering sessions etc.

A date for the diary is 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2017, when a Town Open Day will take place. Thanks to Cllr Mrs Howley and the working group and all the businesses who are engaging with this event.

#### Office Accommodation;

This has been a long process; however, a lot of information is required to be gathered to fully inform the Council before a decision is made, which will hopefully take place in the next few months.

The Lake;

An algae bloom in Spring last year was detected early and treated to prevent the loss of fish.

Another section of revetments was completed in February to secure the bank.

Cemetery;

The Bishop of Tewkesbury consecrated the cemetery extension in February. A revised design for the extension is being progressed with the planning authority.

Recreation Ground;

In principle, the Council has agreed to a long term contractual agreement with Newent Rugby Club for the use of the pitches and changing rooms. The Council are working closely with the Club to progress the arrangement. Thanks to Cllrs Beard, Mrs Marcovecchio and Heathfield for all their work on taking this forward.

Numerous repairs have been carried out on the children's play area and the fencing has been replaced.

Arboretum;

Boundary fencing was replaced last year.

Allotments;

Four quarter plots were introduced in January and were snapped up within a week. Cllrs Mrs Marcovecchio and Miss Shere have been liaising with the Allotment Association throughout the year.

Market House;

Expenditure has been approved for significant repairs to the timber frame and tenders are due back later this month. Once the main repairs are completed, the Market House will be painted.

The Market House was open to visitors on Saturdays and Sundays from 26<sup>th</sup> March to 25<sup>th</sup> September 2016 and 427 visitors were welcomed by the volunteer stewards. I would like to thank Ginny James and all the stewards".

## 5. Question time from the public

No questions had been submitted prior to the meeting. Members of the public were then given the opportunity to raise questions.

It was suggested that due to the dwindling numbers of attendees at the Assembly meetings, the venue should be changed back to the Library and maybe held once the clocks have changed. This will be considered for future meetings.

A representative from the Community Centre spoke stating that residents should be allowed to speak at ordinary council meetings, as it is the case for the majority of other Councils. Cllr Wood confirmed that a public participation session is available at all meetings and went on to explain the difference between the Listening Post and the public participation session. The representative then spoke regarding Section 106 funding that had been returned to the developer as Gloucestershire County Council did not meet the criteria for utilising the funding and asked if the Council were aware of this. The Clerk confirmed that the Council had been briefed.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the funding and it was confirmed that Gloucestershire County Council are trying to reach an agreement with the developer to retain some of the funding and if the money is secured Newent Town Council will act as a conduit for allocating the money. The Clerk confirmed that the Town Council had not been notified that the agreement had been signed and therefore cannot comment on how the monies would be distributed, which had already been communicated to the Community Centre. The Council were asked to resolve that Gloucestershire County Council was negligent by not spending the money.

A resident enquired what had happened to the £40,000 that had been earmarked for flood prevention measures in the town. The Clerk confirmed that further monies had been secured and were still ringfenced by the District Council. A scheme is being designed and works should start in the summer.

A Newent in Bloom representative informed the Council that they wanted to hold a daffodil festival in the future and would like the Town Council's support.

A resident stated that people in the town do know about things which are happening, but just don't care.

Cllr Moseley informed the residents that the Council would be producing a monthly newsletter, which would be published in the Newent Magazine free of charge, to keep residents informed of council activities.

The Mayor thanked all the public for attending and declared the meeting closed at 8.00 pm.