

NEWENT TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Newent Town Council held on Monday 24th May 2021 at Newent Community School, Watery Lane, Newent at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Mrs C Howley, Mrs M Duffield, E Heathfield, Mrs S Marcovecchio, Mrs K Draper, R Beard, Ms C Birkan, Mrs G Moseley, Mrs K Selwyn, Mrs W Odhiambo, A Ralph, Mrs J Gooch

Also present – The Clerk and 5 members of the public

Public Participation Session

A member of the public spoke with regards to the development in Whitegates. A strip of land has been left between the resident's boundary fence and the fencing of the new development and the resident wanted to know what the builders would be doing with it. The Chair confirmed this would be raised with the Forest of Dean District Council. Another resident confirmed that was also her query.

44.1 To note apologies for absence – Cllr Mrs Wadley

44.2 Declarations and Interest on items on the agenda

Cllr Mrs Gooch declared an interest in the accounts to be paid, planning application P0051/21/Discon and the deed of variation grant application from St Marys Church.

Cllr Beard declared an interest in the deed of variation grant application from St Marys Church.

44.3 To sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 5th May 2021

P 929 - Cllr Heathfield stated a word was incorrect in the second amendment proposed under item 43.9.

Resolved: The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 5th May are approved. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Beard, Seconded Cllr Mrs Draper, 10 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention.

44.4 Clerk's update and matters arising from previous minutes

DRP Groups request to film at the Lake – The Council's decision was relayed, and the following response was received:

“Thank you for your email, that's excellent to hear that the council are happy to consider the filming. We have had to press pause on this for now whilst in production for the other part of the video. Once we are back to making a decision on this, I will be back in touch with you if that's ok?”

From previous meetings – Update

Email from GCC re Multi-agency flood meeting:

“Apologies for the radio silence, it’s still extremely busy for our team and district colleagues.

I am still looking into a few options for Newent, hopefully continuing to work with FoDDC and others. I have not issued a call for dates for the multi-agency meeting just yet – as it’s been really difficult getting the right people round the table in a few other locations, so I thought it best to leave it another week or two. At least then, we will know who the new administration will be and who (politically) needs to be involved. We continue to investigate behind the scenes however and will get back to you with a meaningful update on actions and meeting in due course.

Apologies again for the delay. Bear with us”.

NHS and Frontline Worker’ Day Flag – We have enquired if the flag can be produced without a date, so it can be used in the future. This can be accommodated, and the cost of the flag would be £59.09 + VAT. Council to advise which flag they wish to purchase? **Resolved:** The flag is purchased without the date at a cost of £59.09 + VAT. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Draper, Seconded Cllr Mrs Moseley, All in favour.

(Cllr Mrs Gooch left the meeting at this juncture)

44.5 Finance

44.5.1 To approve accounts to be paid

A query was raised regarding Pear Technology. It was confirmed it is the mapping system used for the Cemetery.

Payments made since last meeting		£
Wages		7449.83
Aw Sewing Service	BACS	40.00
Zurich Municipal	BACS	4275.97
Newent Association for the Disabled	BACS	35.00
Grundon	BACS	212.84
Payments to be considered	Bacs/Cheque	£
J Smith	BACS	40.00
Peninsula	BACS	195.70
Pear Technology	BACS	270.00

Glebe Chapel	BACS	20.00
Calfordseaden	BACS	1125.00
Redhand	BACS	525.00
GMT Solutions	BACS	117.12
ROSPA	BACS	328.80
Ledbury Garden Machinery	BACS	85.87
Grundon	BACS	182.24
Safpro	15561	105.06
Mainstream Digital	15562	74.86
Trindle Newspapers	BACS	268.80
Ermin Plant	BACS	299.33
GAPTC	BACS	390.00
Leaf Creative	BACS	378.30

Resolved: The above expenditure is approved, to a value of £16,419.72. **Record of Voting:** Proposed by Cllr Mrs Draper, Seconded by Cllr Mrs Marcovecchio, All in favour.

(Cllr Mrs Gooch re-joined the meeting)

44.5.2 To receive budget update (March)

Cllr Mrs Howley confirmed the bank accounts had been checked and agreed with the monthly reconciliation total.

A question was asked if the overspends had been reported to Council before and this was confirmed. **Resolved:** The budget update is accepted. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Draper, Seconded Cllr Mrs Duffield, All in favour.

44.5.3 Notification of insurance claim – for information only

The Council's insurance company has been notified of an allegation of damage to a headstone which they are investigating.

44.5.4 To review the asset register

Queries were raised regarding the values on the register. The Clerk confirmed the asset register is not the same as the insurance valuations. Items added to the register are the prices at the time of purchase/inclusion on the register, the figures do not change unless the asset is sold. They are not the same as the insurance costs, which usually increase over time.

A query was raised why the duck platform/houses were added to the register when they were donated.

The costs of the items were supplied by those who donated them to the Council. As the structures were over £100 and they became a council asset, they were included in the register.

Resolved: The Asset register is approved. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Beard, Seconded Cllr Mrs Marcovecchio, 11 in favour, 1 abstention.

44.6 To consider response required to correspondence/consultations received

44.6.1 South West Regional Crime Unit – To consider offer to provide free fraud prevention presentation

Several councillors spoke in favour of organising a presentation, although some felt it would be better in person so all could be included.

Cllr Mrs Birkan proposed that the offer of a presentation is accepted for the Council initially and expressed hope to hold a further event for the public. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Mrs Moseley.

Cllr Mrs Gooch made an amendment to the proposal. **Resolved:** The offer of a presentation is accepted for the Council and any other interested parties to attend and will be promoted on the website and Facebook. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Gooch, Seconded Cllr Heathfield, All in favour.

44.6.2 Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service – Community payback offer to councils

A number of Councillors expressed support for using this service, as it had been successful in the past. The main query related to identifying appropriate tasks. **Resolved:** The Estate Supervisor to produce a list of works to be undertaken and is delegated to take this forward. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Duffield, Seconded Cllr Beard, All in favour.

44.6.3 Forest of Dean Youth Association – To consider holding a Holiday Hunger session

This is a multisport activities session that could be held in the May half term and costs £450. Food and drink would be available for 15 registered young people, but more can participate in the activities.

A discussion took place and comments included -would FVAF be providing the staff? Is there a budget available? Could funding be sourced through the District Council's Community fund? If there was poor take up would the cost still be £450? **Resolved:** Cllr Mrs Howley contacts FVAF to enquire if uptake can be guaranteed and if so, the Council will provide funding for the event. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Howley, Seconded Cllr Mrs Draper, All in favour.

44.6.4 Forest of Dean District Council – To consider proposed street name for development of 6 dwellings in Southend Lane

The suggested names did not express any connection with the site.

Resolved: Moat View is proposed. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Duffield, Seconded Cllr Beard, 10 in favour, 2 abstentions.

44.6.5 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government – Electronic communications infrastructure consultation

Resolved: Councillors to send individual responses to the consultation. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Gooch, Seconded Cllr Beard, All in favour.

44.6.6 The Department of Culture, Media and Sports – Call for evidence – Improving connectivity to very hard to reach premises

Resolved: Councillors to send individual responses to the call for evidence requested. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Duffield, Seconded Cllr Heathfield, 11 in favour, 1 abstention.

44.7 Planning

44.7.1 Planning applications to be considered

P0054/21/Discon – Land North of Southend Lane, Newent

Discharge of condition 13 (suds management and maintenance plan) relating to planning permission P1330/18/OUT. **Resolved:** No objection subject to a suitable Sustainable Urban Drainage System being in place. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Gooch, Seconded Cllr Beard, 11 in favour, 1 against.

P0816/21/FUL – Land North of Southend Lane, Newent

Variation of Condition 01 (approved plans) of reserved matters permission reference P0041/20/APP (as amended by P1548/20/FUL) to amend house type substitutions, partial levels changes and other minor material changes to the approved scheme. **Resolved:** **Resolved:** Object. The development windows will be overlooking the neighbouring properties. The development is taller and there will be visibility into the existing dwellings. The strip of land in between the boundary of the existing properties and development fences will become overgrown. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Gooch, Seconded Cllr Mrs Moseley, All in favour.

P0806/21/FUL – 37 Lakeside, Newent

Erection of a single storey porch extension. **Resolved:** No objection.
Record of Voting: Proposed Cllr Mrs Duffield, Seconded Cllr Mrs Draper, All in favour.

P0051/21/Discon - Land adjacent Southern's Barn, Southend Lane, Newent

Discharge of condition 09 (surface water drainage) relating to P0241/21/FUL

(Cllr Mrs Gooch left the meeting whilst this planning application was considered)

(3 members of the public left the meeting at this juncture)

Resolved: No objection. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Duffield, Seconded Cllr Mrs Draper, All in favour.

(Cllr Mrs Gooch re-joined the meeting)

P0747/21/FUL – The Cottage, Tewkesbury Rd, Newent

Alterations to existing porch and patio. **Resolved:** No objection.
Record of Voting: Proposed Cllr Mrs Draper, Seconded Cllr Mrs Duffield, All in favour.

P0748/21/LBC – The Cottage, Tewkesbury Rd, Newent

Listed building consent for the alteration of existing porch and patio.
Resolved: No objection. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Duffield, Seconded Cllr Mrs Draper, 11 in favour, 1 abstention.

44.7.2 To note planning decisions

P0045/21/Discon Newent Community Centre, Ross Road, Newent

Discharge of condition 04 (bio diversity enhancement) relating to planning permission P1219/19/FUL

P0509/21/FUL Woodgate Cottage, Cliffords Mesne, Newent

Erection of a single storey rear extension to form an orangery

P0455/21/LBC 17 Broad Street, Newent

Replacement door to shop front

P0017/21/Discon Southend Nurseries, Southend Lane, Newent

Discharge of condition 18 (verification report) relating to P0981/19/FUL

P0015/21/Discon Land North of Southend Lane, Newent

Discharge of condition 10 (Construction method statement) (revised) of outline planning permission P1330/18/OUT

P0457/21/ADV Junction of Gloucester and Onslow Road, Newent

Advertisement consent for the erection of a standing directional sign

P0029/21/Discon Okle Byre (Barn 1) Okle Green, Golden Valley, Upleadon

Discharge of conditions 06 (mitigation) and 08 (Bio-diversity enhancement) relating to planning permission P1431/20/FUL

44.8 To receive and note Internal Audit report

A thorough audit had been undertaken which includes many procedural aspects as well as financial. A couple of recommendations made will be implemented. Item m on the AGAR internal audit report was reported as no, this was due to an administration error and the wrong notice being uploaded onto the website, although the error has been rectified.

(1 member of the public left the meeting at this juncture)

Resolved: The internal audit report is accepted. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Odhiambo, Seconded Cllr Beard, 11 in favour, 1 abstention.

44.9 To consider the town regeneration working group's proposal to discuss and consider an agreement to spend up to £500 for planning/listed building advice from Forest of Dean District Council. The fee to be taken from professional fees budget

Resolved: Up to £500 can be spent on planning/listed building advice from Forest of Dean District Council. The costs to be taken from professional fees. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Beard, Seconded Cllr Ms Birkan, 11 in favour, 1 abstention.

44.10 To revisit the decision taken by Council on 5 May 2021 to approve Staff Committee Terms of Reference, as requested by 5 Councillors in accordance with Standing Order 7a. The proposed motion: to request that the Council revisit the approved amendments to the Staff Committee Terms of Reference and revert back to the original proposal presented to Council on 5th May.

(1 member of the public re-joined the meeting at this juncture)

A lengthy debate took place.

Cllr Heathfield expressed his disappointment to see the amendments and recommended this revisit of both amendments be rejected, to keep the Council legally correct and to ensure the necessary oversight from Full Council is maintained.

Cllr Heathfield called for a named recorded vote on both amendments.

Other comments raised included - if the Committee cannot make decisions, is there a need for a Staffing Committee? the whole Council is responsible for all decisions and it is unacceptable for any committee to make decisions and put other councillors in a vulnerable position, delaying some decisions such as appointing a Clerk is not of real importance as Council has 2 weekly meetings, this is a sensitive issue and the committee is not acting against the Council and councillors can ask questions of the Committee, the Staff Committee are elected by Full Council to act on the Council's behalf and if every decision has to be brought back to Council the Staff Committee should be disbanded, the staff Committee feel some members have been bullying the Committee members, reasons stated for bringing back this item are totally unacceptable, the Staff Committee have never raised issues before, if Council agrees the proposal it will be a dereliction of duty, we need to trust the people elected to run the committee, criticism regard the Chair's casting vote was unfair the Chair was trying to take a balanced view, staff committee members have a huge amount of employment experience.

Cllr Heathfield proposed that the terms of reference approved on the 5th May stand. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Heathfield, Seconded Cllr Mrs Gooch, in favour – Cllrs Heathfield, Mrs Gooch, Ms Birkan and Ralph. Against – Cllrs Mrs Selwyn, Mrs Moseley, Beard, Mrs Draper, Mrs Marcovecchio, Mrs Odhiambo, Mrs Duffield, Mrs Howley. The proposal failed.

Resolved: The original proposed terms of references proposed on 5th May are accepted, with the amendment to allow the meetings to be open to the public but the wording 'other special reasons' removed. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Marcovecchio, Seconded Cllr Beard, in favour – Cllrs Mrs Selwyn, Mrs Moseley, Beard, Mrs Draper, Mrs Marcovecchio, Mrs Odhiambo, Mrs Duffield, Mrs Howley. Against - Cllrs Heathfield, Mrs Gooch, Ms Birkan and Ralph.

Cllr Mrs Duffield resigned from the Staff Committee.

44.11 To consider deed of variation grant funding application and make recommendations to Gloucestershire County Council

(Cllrs Mrs Gooch and Beard left the meeting whilst this the item was considered)

44.11.1 St Mary's Church

Some questions were raised regarding how much grant monies were left and when did they have to be spent by. The Clerk confirmed the exact figure would be circulated to Councillors, but it was in the region of £13,000. Grant monies have to be spent by June 2022 or the monies will be returned to the developer.

Resolved: The Council supports the application and will recommend to Gloucestershire County Council that £8,250.00 is allocated to St Mary's Church's youth project. **Record of Voting:**

Proposed Cllr Mrs Marcovecchio, Seconded Cllr Mrs Duffield, All in favour.

(Cllrs Mrs Gooch and Beard re-joined the meeting at this juncture)

(The Town Clerk left the meeting whilst the following item was considered and the item was minuted by Cllr Mrs Duffield)

44.12 To consider the Staff Committee's recommendation to pay the Clerk's accrued leave to extend leaving date

Resolved: That the Council accepts the Staff Committee's recommendation to pay any remaining accrued leave to the Clerk. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Beard, Seconded Cllr Mrs Marcovecchio, 11 in favour, 1 abstention

44.13 To consider the Staff Committee's recommendation to appoint a locum Clerk and RFO from 14 June

Resolved: The Council accepts the Staff Committee's recommendation to appoint a locum Clerk & RFO to start by 14th June, working 4 hours a day until 17th, thereafter full-time until a new Clerk/RFO commences. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Draper, Seconded Cllr Mrs Marcovecchio, 8 in favour, 2 against, 2 abstentions.

44.14 To consider recommendation from the Staff Committee to adopt a Display Screen Equipment Eyecare Policy

A query was raised regarding DSE and why screens were not already in place, it was confirmed DSE measures are in place but this relates to eye tests. **Resolved:** The eyecare policy is adopted. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Duffield, seconded Cllr Heathfield, 11 in favour, 1 abstention.

44.15 Estate Management

44.15.1 To consider quotations for felling Oak and Beech tree at the Lake, as previously agreed.

Resolved: The quotation by company A for £3,850 is accepted. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Draper, Seconded Cllr Mrs Duffield, All in favour.

44.15.2 To consider options for tree carvings at the Lake

A lengthy discussion took place and comments included; although monies have already been allocated to other projects, the submitted children's designs for the lake entrance should be used, beautification of Newent should not go ahead of other repair works, there is no urgency as the Oak lengths can be left for years, this would be good for welcoming people to the town, this could encourage visitors. **Resolved:** When the Oak Tree is felled, 6 metres of trunk from the ground is to remain for carving. A large piece of timber is cut in half to create two posts for carving and to be

installed at the lake entrance at a total cost of £6,650, monies to be taken from lake gateway earmarked reserves and the community benefit solar farm contribution. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Howley, Seconded Cllr Mrs Odhiambo, 10 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention.

- 44.16 To consider appointing Cllr Mrs Draper to undertake the role of allotment inspections and competition judge

Resolved: Cllr Mrs Draper is appointed to undertake the role of allotment inspections and competition judge. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Gooch, Seconded Cllr Mrs Howley, All in favour.

- 44.17 To consider appointing Cllr Ms Birkan to the chapel building working group

Resolved: Cllr Ms Birkan is appointed onto the chapel building working group. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Gooch, Seconded Cllrs Mrs Howley, All in favour.

- 44.18 To consider appointing Cllr Ms Birkan to the residents' community group

Cllr Ms Birkan withdrew her nomination.

- 44.19 To consider appointing Cllr Ms Birkan to the Youth Action Group

This item was deferred until the YAG terms of reference are reviewed.

- 44.20 To consider appointing Cllr Ms Birkan to the review of young persons facilities working group

Resolved: Cllr Ms Birkan is appointed onto the young persons facilities working group. **Record of Voting:** Proposed Cllr Mrs Gooch, Seconded Cllr Mrs Howley, All in favour.

- 44.21 To receive committee/representative reports and Mayor's update

Mayor's Update

Community Centre refurbishment

Cllr Duffield and I attended a meeting with representatives from Glebe Chapel, to be updated on the refurbishment of the Community Centre.

Phase one of the improvements to the centre are planned.

The time scale is penciled in to commence March 2022, with a possible completion envisaged for between 9 to 10 months.

The staff can remain in the office and continue to work as normal. The changes being made will affect the other side of the Community Building.

During this time there will be several actions that will affect the staff.

Point one - The fire escape will become the only route into and out of the office, this will be shrouded so that it is watertight and comfortable to use.

Able bodied residents will be able to use this route, we will need to ensure that others not so able can be met by the staff, to deal with any concerns etc.

Point two - Posh toilets will be provided for the staff to use, plus a water supply so that the staff can have drinks etc.

The build will have an industrial chic image.

There will be no reason for the council offices to be changed until say 2023.

A new lease will be issued soon, there is a change of legal identity and the lease will need to show that.

There will be two possible options for council offices, although these were not discussed.

Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism Membership

Notification has been received that the Town Council's membership has been paid by Forest of Dean District Council

Cllr Mrs Gooch informed the Council that a local business has commissioned paintings, prints and postcards of the Valegro statue and the sculpturer has given permission for a percentage of the monies to be donated to the Council for the upkeep of the statue.

The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 9.01pm.