

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY, HELD ON MONDAY 17TH APRIL 2023,
AT NEWENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL, AT 7PM.

In attendance: Cllrs Chris Howley (Mayor), Mrs M Duffield, Mrs K Draper, Mrs S Marcovecchio, Mrs G Moseley, Mrs K Selwyn and Ms C Stone

Also present: District Cllr Vilnis Vesma and 28 Members of the Public

1. To note apologies for absence.

Apologies were noted for Cllrs Roger Beard and Julia Gooch

2. To approve the Minutes of the Annual Assembly Meeting held on Wednesday 27th April 2022.

The Minutes of the Annual Assembly Meeting held on Wednesday 27th April 2022 were approved.

3. Matters arising

There were none.

4. To receive the Town Council's report for 2022/2023 by the Town Mayor, Councillor Mrs C Howley

Cllr Mrs C Howley read out her report.

See Appendix One.

5. To receive the District and County Councillor reports

A report was received County Cllr Gill Moseley.

See Appendix Two.

A joint report was received from District Cllr V Vesma and District Cllr Gill Moseley.

See Appendix Three

6. Questions time from the public – Chaired by the Town Mayor.

Q. Regarding the further development - what further infrastructure is planned?

A. Cllr Gill Moseley responded that all these points will be covered by the NDP. It is not within remit of planning but they can allocate land to ensure that there is an area for utilities and facilities (i.e. GP's and dentists). Whilst the Local Plan can allocate land for supermarkets and can influence those decisions it can't force a particular supermarket to come to town. Highways do have a say in the planning process but

have to abide by a set criteria. Surveys are normally used to investigate the capacity and can influence whether new development can occur.

Q. District Cllr Vesma expressed regret at the Royal Mail decision over the first and last posts collection times. He also commented on how lovely it was to see the post boxes with the knitted tops.

Q. Is there an update on the climate change plans.

A. Cllr Gill Moseley provided a brief update on the Council's adopted Climate Change Strategy, which falls under the remit of the Planning and Environment Committee. This information can be found on the Council's website. Cllr Moseley said that there is room for more volunteers to join the group.

Q. How are the Councils coronation celebrations are coming on.

A. The Council is supporting the celebrations organised by the Newent Initiative Trust. The Chairman of the Trust Mr Keith Urch provided an update: - there is an intention to have a large screen by the Market House from 10am. There will be free entertainment until 11pm. Newent Town Council have provided a grant of up to £5,000 but are still looking for further funding sources. The full details will be Newent Initiative Trust's website.

Q. The Recycling Posters are too long, they need to be shorter and punchier and just provide details on where to recycle common items.

A. Cllr Gill Moseley said the feedback was welcomed and the Committee will address the issues raised.

Q. Mr Buckley thanked the current Councillors for their time, efforts, and service.

A. Cllr Howsley thanked Mr Buckley for his kind words.

There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed at 7.54 pm

Appendix One

APM Mayors Report 17th April 2023

Good evening, everyone and welcome to our Annual Parish Meeting. I will take you through the main points of the Council's year, afterwards we will have time to answer questions previously submitted to the Clerk. We start the year from April 2022.

This is my third year as Mayor together with Cllr Mary Duffield as Deputy Mayor. We are pleased that at last, we have been able to attend some functions, and meet others face to face, with Covid 19 although not eradicated, at least not quite the threat that it once was.

Newent lake and woods has always been looked upon as our jewel in our crown, it is a haven for wildlife, and offers fresh air and exercise to the public.

As you will know, we have over the years enhanced the area with, Duck Houses, a Wildflower Meadow, plus bird and bat boxes. This year we were met with a difficult decision to lose a tree, the tree was diseased and so had to be felled. Rather than lose the tree completely we took the decision to have the boughs of the tree felled leaving the trunk part standing and ready to be sculptured.

Internationally acclaimed sculptor Daniel Cordell was chosen to make something beautiful with this trunk, and I think that you will agree he did a wonderful job. This was completed in time for the Queen's Jubilee celebrations. As well as sculpturing the trunk, Daniel made a seat out of one part of a bough. He has also sculptured wildlife from another bough.

We have Brock Badger, and a fish positioned around the lake area at the moment. We also have a fox and Stag Beetle waiting in the wings, they will be put in position soon.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations took place over June bank holiday weekend.

The flower tubs really showcased the town which looked so attractive together with the colourful bunting and flags on display.

To initiate the commemorations a small Oak tree was planted in the grounds of Newent Lake. Local children assisted in its planting and they received Platinum Jubilee celebration certificates to mark the occasion. Councillors and members of the public also attended and assisted with the tree planting.

A small group of people worked on the upcoming celebrations to arrange events over the weekend. Firstly, the Union flag was raised, and Reverend Simon Mason read the Proclamation. This was attended by members of the public and local councillors. The bells rang out at St Mary's church.

A lovely free afternoon cream tea was arranged at the Memorial Hall, together with music by Pick & Mix.

What fun was had, everyone sang along to the music, enjoyed their afternoon tea, and even had a visit from “Her Majesty.” The National Anthem was sung, and a toast was made with wine supplied by a local business.

A family fun day was arranged at the Lake. Everyone was encouraged to bring a picnic, however they were offered, free hog roast, fresh strawberries, scones and cream, cakes, a children’s magician, and live music. Ellie Pensom came and played the National Anthem on her violin,

Finally, we had a uniformed parade from St Mary’s Church to the Lake area where a special open air Pentecost service was held.

We thank the many local business who gave food and wine for these events, they were very generous and we do appreciate it.

The Council was delighted to announce that the volunteer fishing bailiff team was strengthened in numbers. The bailiffs regularly patrol the lake during fishing season, and help to make sure that everyone fishing at the lake is doing so legitimately and that should any problems arise, they are dealt with properly.

The Council is grateful to all of the bailiffs for giving up their time to help the community in this way.

We are pleased to support the longstanding Thursday market stall, and have, as per the request of local businesses, been able to encourage a monthly Saturday market which was initiated in July last year.

These markets have been very popular and have increased footfall in the town. They are on hold whilst we have repairs carried out to the Market House, but once these are complete, we will reinstate them.

The Council took on the responsibility for planting the floral displays in the town. The work was taken on by a local nursery, and the results were extremely pretty. We are very grateful to the volunteers who helped look after the displays in the town, particularly the de-heading of the flowers when needed. This was a big commitment and it is appreciated.

The efforts of the Estates team in carrying out the watering also needs a mention. Again, we appreciate all that was done.

The efforts of the staff and volunteers were rewarded by Newent in Bloom in their Summer Gardening competition, with the award of a Gold certificate for best public & community effort.

The prolonged hot dry weather this year caused issues with the water and oxygen levels at the lake.

The oxygen was reduced to critical levels in the month of August. Council staff and Water bailiffs worked tirelessly to rectify the situation and to keep the water aerated enough for the fish to survive. Aerators pumped water into the lake - this was carried out during evenings as well as during the day. In addition regular samples of the

water were taken for testing to ensure oxygen levels were sufficient. We are grateful to the dedicated staff and volunteers who assisted with this, a valiant effort.

It was with great sadness that we all learnt of the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The Council sent its heartfelt condolences to the Royal family and remembered with gratitude the lifetime of service Her Majesty devoted to our Nation and the Commonwealth.

As you will understand, there is protocol to follow in these circumstances, therefore a series of events and duties were carried out by the Council to mark the passing of Her Majesty, and the ascension of King Charles III to the throne. These were:

Union flag lowered and raised as appropriate.

Books of condolences, a quiet area for contemplation/reflection on the life of Her Majesty, plus a designated area for floral tributes, together with an official laying of flowers, at St Mary's Church.

Ringing of St Mary's Church bells

The proclamation of the new King in the Market Square.

A service of thanksgiving for the life of Queen Elizabeth II held at St Mary's Church.

A two-minute silence was observed.

Nationally and finally, there was a televised funeral of Her Majesty.

Thank you to everyone involved, and for working effortlessly during this time. The Town Council thanks the community for coming together, and those who attended and participated in the events over the period of mourning.

The Council provides grants to local organisations, this year we have provide grants to:

Newent Initiative Trust	for Youth Provision	£ 9000.00
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St Mary's Church,	to enhance Youth work in the town	£ 4200.00
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Citizens Advice		£ 1500.00
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We also supported the Busses4us initiative to the sum of		£15000.00
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The Town Council joined various dignitaries at Newent Community School & Sixth Form Centre in honor of Armistice Day. The outdoor service led by Rev Simon Mason included the reading of names and remembrance of former pupils who gave their lives in the service to their country.

The last post was played by a school pupil, and the two-minute silence was held at 11am. As always, the schoolchildren behaved impeccably and were a credit to their school.

The council was pleased to again erect the large red poppies throughout the town as a mark of respect.

The Town Council's Remembrance service was at St Mary's Church and officiated by Rev Simon Mason. It was supported by the Newent Branch of the Royal British Legion. Councillors, dignitaries, uniformed Services, emergency services, members of the public, and voluntary & community groups. This was the largest parade for a Remembrance service that has been held in the Town.

After the two-minute silence, the names of the Newent parish residents who gave their lives in service to their country were read out, and wreaths were laid in their honor.

The council supported a Warm Space initiative. This was born out of the increase in the utility bills, making it a choice of heating or eating. We worked alongside other communities/organisations in the town who offered somewhere warm and comfortable, together with a hot drink or cup a soup to anyone who popped into the advertised venues. A lot was learnt during this period, and it is hoped that next year we will be able to carry on with this initiative. Thank you to the businesses who supplied goodies for the community to use.

The Christmas lights event was again a huge success. I think that you will agree the lights look stunning every year. The town was buzzing with excitement, there were market stalls, fairground rides, live music, and of course the festive parade and the big switch on. Father Christmas was working very hard, with so many young people coming to see him and give their requests, no wonder he only comes to Newent once a year!

The Christmas home decoration competition was again held this year. This was the fourth successive year that the Town Council has organised the competition. This time however the emphasis was on displays using minimal mains electricity to take account of the rising cost of energy. Whilst there wasn't the usual number of entries the town council was very impressed with the effort and creativity of those that entered the competition. The overall winner was from Foley Road, the judges were impressed by their array of solar lights, Christmas characters and handmade textile creations. They received a prize of a big bag of useful gadgets and festive goodies kindly donate by MKM.

The annual Civic Carol Service was a lovely festive community occasion. It was a particularly cold and icy evening, so a big thank you to everyone involved, for braving the weather. This is always an occasion that lets us know Christmas is just around the corner. The highlights were a wonderful performance of carols and a Christmas poem by pupils from the Federation of Newent Schools. Thank you to the teachers who facilitated this. There was also a beautiful rendition of carols and seasonal songs by the Newent Scottish Choir. There were readings from representatives from Town Councils, Newent Community School, and Newent Association for the Disabled. After the service, refreshments of mulled wine, home made mince pies and Christmas cake were gratefully received.

A big thank you to the staff who worked on this.

The Market House is a grade II listed building, which has special architectural and historical interest in Newent. As happens with any historic building the Market House was in need of repairs. The Town Council was successful in applying for a Public Works loan from central government in order to carry out refurbishment works.

Working with Chartered Surveyors & Historic Building Consultants, and a specialist Historic Building Contractor, work commenced in January. The work being carried out is to repair the timber frames and replace the infill panels with lime render, this will give the Market House a facelift without altering its appearance. Photographs have been taken during the process of this work for people to see and to maintain a record of what was found and the work required to make good, using of course the materials suitable for the building. It was interesting to be told how the builders found that fern and gorse had been used at times in these infills, in fact some of the gorse had been in flower, naturally in those days the people used whatever materials they could easily find, how times have changed.

The Market House is used as a Visitors Information Centre and is open to the public for various months of the year. The council thanks the Market House stewards who give their time for this, so that others may see the artifacts that are held there, and learn about the Town's history.

The Council has updated the Community Emergency response Plan, this will be reviewed annually. This is a very involved plan, and requires a great deal of time to ensure all procedures are in place. It takes into account all sorts of scenarios that may become an emergency, and require action by members until the Services reach us. Thank you to the members involved in this.

Two disabled picnic benches at the lake were in a poor state and required renewing, this we were recently able to do. Under the guidance of the Estates team the council purchased two new picnic benches. We chose a wooden rustic look in terms of appearance and ensured they are robust for long term use. The benches were tested for suitability by one of our residents who uses a wheelchair, she was very happy with what we have done, and is looking forward to using this facility in the warmer weather. We also upgraded some of the lake paths to improve mobility access, which was also met with approval.

We were happy to sign up to the civility and respect pledge – a District Council initiative and which we should all as Councillors be mindful of.

You may have noticed post box toppers in the town just in time for Easter. We appreciate the ladies involved in this, they have done a fantastic job, very cleverly done. Again this gives an enhancement to the town, it is always rewarding when the community come together, so a big thank you to those involved.

We also (as mentioned previously) support the new 232 Daffodil line bus service. Gloucestershire County Council agreed to provide and install a new living roof bus stop, conditioned upon Newent Town Council agreeing to take ownership and responsibility once installed. The bus stop is positioned at the coach bay in Lewall

Street carpark, and Newent Town Council was happy to adopt the new shelter. It was also pleasing to support the first day of operation for the new bus, Sunday the 2nd April.

During the year the Council has consider well over 100 planning applications, as well as being consulted on street names for new developments

I thank all of the Councillors for their dedication and hard work carried out during this last year. The coming year will I am sure be filled with plenty to do. Should you, the public wish to contact any one of us our details are on the Newent Town Council website, or the Clerk will also provide contact details.

We are sorry to have said goodbye to our clerk Michael Greenfield, we thank Michael for his hard work and dedication and wish him well in his new venture.

We also thank the office staff and the estates ream for all of their hard work carried out throughout the year.

Appendix Two

Newent Annual Parish Meeting 2023

County Councillor Report – Gill Moseley

Budget for 2023/24

Proposals put forward by the Conservative majority administration for £567m were passed in February. This represents a £46m increase on 22/23 levels. For a band D property, this will mean a monthly increase of £6.04. It is made up of 2.99% increase on council tax and a 2% precept for adult social care.

Amendments by all three opposition parties were accepted.

These included the following from my Group:

£80,000 – Grit Bin and Winter Resilience Fund

Members to work with local communities to identify the places needed for grit bins, and to work with Parish, Town and District Councils, and schools, to ensure the bins are put into the correct locations, and to discuss arrangements for the filling of them in future years. Members to be asked after 6 months if they plan to use the funding, with unspent allocations then redistributed around the Members who need top-up funding. £1.500 is suggested for each division with any unused funds redistributed where need is greatest.

£400,000 – Road Safety Additional Measures

To be spent on reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. The Road Safety Capital Investment is set at £400,000 per year for next three years, in line with the

Road Safety Policy 2022-32. This additional funding is to enable what would have been implemented over 3 years to take place in year 1.

(£100K is also earmarked for extra TRO funding. This was the Conservatives' own amendment. The result, we believe, of the pressure we brought to bear on the matter in scrutiny and in our own proposed amendment.)

£75,000 – Pilot project on social isolation and alcohol

£100,00 - Support for Walking

For supporting walking, specifically around local shopping “parades” where pavement faults cause disproportionate difficulties for people who rely on their local shops (and knock-on effects for the local economy).

£25,000 – Public Right of Way

Increasing the resource available for mapping so people know which walking routes are available to them.

£75,000 – Children’s Services Spend to Save, Looking at What Works in Demand Management

To commission a piece of research to look nationally at models from Councils which have managed to manage demand, thus cutting entrants into the Children-in-Care community.

Motions to Full Council

In recent meetings we have tabled motions, of which amended versions were passed after the Conservative administration removed criticisms of the government. Topics included:

- The need for better access to Dentists.
- River Pollution
- Cost of Living Crisis
- Voter ID (in the previous year but now very relevant)

In addition, public questions have been tabled to provide information in the public domain. Recently I have asked about the wisdom of the decision to stop accepting used tyres at the Household Recycling Centres.

Local Bus Transport

The GCC (our local Transport Authority) failed in its bid to win government funding for its Bus Service Improvement Plan. However, officers in the Integrated Transport Unit have done their best to restore some of the most drastic cuts in countywide services made by Stagecoach, begun a year ago with the 132/32 Ledbury and Ross service beyond Newent. Problems persist with lack of bus drivers but the Newent

based Buses4Us community action group, supported by the ITU, Herefordshire council and all the town and parish councils along the route as well as businesses and individuals has raised the six-figure sum needed to reinstate the service which should start in early April with a two hourly service throughout the day including Sundays, with additional evening services on Friday and Saturday.

Road Safety Policy

A joint fund of £600K has been set up between the Police and Crime Commissioner and the County Council to enable communities to take action through Speedwatch Groups and parish councils to improve road safety in their local areas. The closing dates are now past for applications but there is still help available through the CARS toolkit and other channels. More funding may arrive in the next financial year. Current bids are still being processed for equipment such as VAS signs and speed cameras.

Traffic Regulation Orders which are needed for the installation of speed limits have received a funding boost but there is a shortage of staff to process these orders which cost at least £10K which is usually shared between the GCC and the local parish/town council. Several similar orders may be batched together to save costs.

Highways Local Fund

Various projects have been supported such as the new foot and cycle bridge over the ford in Whitehouse lane between Kilcot and Oxenhall, footpath renewal including within Newent, the installation of kissing gates the repair of pavements and new signage. £30K is usually available for each division per annum. There are ten parishes in Newent division. Part of the fund has been used to undertake a traffic survey in Culver Street to provide evidence for a solution to the missing pavements. This is being pursued throughout Highways Safety officers – but too slowly.

Rural Estates Working Group

GCC owns a number of farms across the county and has set up a working group of which I am a member to review their management and future in the light of the Climate Emergency and its current policy of potential disposal of a proportion of the estate. It met for the first time on April 1st and will continue for six months before making recommendations to the administration regarding its Strategic Estates Plan.

Build Back Better – Councillor Scheme

Out of the £40K for the term of office (until 2025) approximately £9K remains, but potential bids for much of this amount are in the offing. The scheme has been widely circulated and most parishes have taken advantage of the grant to a greater or lesser extent. Various projects that cover the FoDDC or are based in Newent which have wider take-up, have also been supported. Further bids are welcome but modest bids are more likely to be successful at this point.

Committees

I am a member of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and as the Spokesperson for the Environment for my Group, I have regular quarterly meetings with the Head of Services, Colin Chick and other senior officers. These meetings are also attended by my colleagues who have responsibilities for Traffic and Transport, and Economic Growth.

I also sit on the GCC Planning Committee which meets less frequently than the monthly FoDDC Development Management Committee to consider applications in the areas of education, waste management and mineral extraction.

I am also a member of the Constitution Committee which oversees the governance of the council. My group successfully proposed some changes to the protocol of the Environment Scrutiny Committee where important office reports have been noted but questions were discouraged.

Any Questions?

Please feel free to contact me about these or any other matters.

gill.moseley@gloucestershire.gov.uk

01531 820826

Appendix Three

Joint District Councillor report for Newent APM 2023

Cllr Gill Moseley's main area of activity in the FoDDC is with regard to planning. The Planning Committee has now been renamed '**Development Management Committee**' to reflect its role in considering applications for major developments, those which go against Council policy, those which have raised significant numbers of public objections or have been 'called in' by a local member. This committee meets monthly and is preceded by site visits in the previous week. Gill has made representations for a number of individual applicants as well as for larger proposals. She has also been liaising about several local solar farm applications with local residents and officers. It is noteworthy that the most recent decision (Hartpury – Murrell's End) was for refusal mainly on grounds of the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV).

Cllr Moseley is also involved with **Forward Planning** as a member of the portfolio support group. This ties in well with her role on the Town Council as Chair of the Steering Group for the Newent Neighbourhood Development Plan, which has a stall here this evening. The Local Plan for the FoDDC is progressing slowly and involves consideration of land for housing of which there is significant allocation in Newent over the term of the plan which spans the period 2026-41. Allocations of land for business and community infrastructure also falls under the consideration of this

group which makes recommendations to Cabinet and then Full Council for decision. Both Cllr Moseley and Cllr Vesma have been insistent that development should not proceed in Newent without consideration of vital infrastructure and how to balance the development with the need to retain the vitality of the town centre. It is a step in the right direction that the need for a master planner has been recognised by the District Council planners.

Cllr Vilnis Vesma is a member of the **Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee**. He has been attending the evidence-gathering sessions for an extensive enquiry into the history of an ambitious redevelopment project dubbed 'Cinderford Northern Quarter', which has run into problems. He has been active on the question of the Council's response to the **climate emergency**, advocating decarbonization of the domestic waste collection fleet and pushing for the Council to improve its approach by declaring a multi-year forward carbon budget.

Cllr Vesma serves on the **Active Travel Infrastructure Task Group** which brings together the District and County Councils and a number of other bodies aiming to reduce reliance on cars. He has been vocal on the need for better transport links, particularly between Newent and Gloucester. One result of this is that the need for cycling infrastructure from Newent via Hartpury to Gloucester has been definitely recognised by the County Council. He is also trying to ensure that the debate covers car sharing, public transport and other measures.

Among the other local issues that Cllr Vesma has dealt with, he has helped a number of residents who had been kept waiting too long for **waste recycling containers**. This includes obtaining a supply of blue bags which he can lend out when necessary.

Cllr Gill Moseley

Cllr Vilnis Vesma

20 March 2023