

Newnham on Severn Parish Council

Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 20th APRIL 2021 at via zoom

Notes from the Parish meeting of 25th April 2019

The notes of the previous meeting were not circulated due to elapsed time and COVID restrictions.

In attendance were 6 councillors, 4 members of the public and County Cllr R Boyles

Prior to the meeting a minutes silence was held to respect the passing of HRH The Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh

To receive the report of the Chairman of the Parish Council

Cllr Hughes welcomed those present to the meeting and made clear that this was an informal meeting where no standing orders applied. He thanked County Cllr Boyles and District Cllr Packer for their support and the commitment and effort of all councillors and the Clerk during the past year.

Council changes – Within the last year Cllr's Toby Weeden and Joe Wickham have resigned from council, their efforts during their time on council were appreciated and he wished them both well for the future. Cllr Sarah Tempest has now joined. The casual vacancy created by the resignation of Joe Wickham will be filled at the April meeting, returning council to its full compliment.

He then commented on a number of issues and activities in the parish over the last 12 months

COVID – The last year has proven difficult for all because of the pandemic. However, except for the March 20 meeting, council has continued to meet (virtually) on all other occasions and council activities continued as normal. Newnham residents have proven resilient during this time and supportive of each other. The parish council recognises that support, proving the good community spirit that exists in the village.

Riverbank – Council are working with Freemans homes to improve the pathway along the riverbank. Council has also a substantial commitment in the budget for a permanent fix to the culvert damage that occurs on a regular basis.

Changing rooms – Improvements are being made to ensure a wider community use is possible. A new kitchen has been fitted and further internal improvements are planned. New windows have been fitted free of charge by Glevum Windows and replacement doors will be purchased and fitted in coming months. The outside of the building is in the process of being refurbished, window grill covers have been striped and repainted and other works are planned.

Red Telephone Box at the Green – As a result of strong community interest in the retention of the box it has now been given grade II listed status by Historic England. Council is working with a community group to preserve the box for future generations.

Communications policy – The existing policy has been reviewed and greater emphasis placed on social media and more regular Newsletter issues to keep villagers informed of activities.

Harmony project – Working with the Harmony group, tree planting in the Playing Field has taken place and improvements to the Open Space at Sheens Meadow have started to show real results. He thanked the group for their commitment to these projects and others projects planned for the coming year

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Financial report

The Clerk advised that the 2020/21 financial year bank reconciliation has been completed ready for approval at the April PC meeting. The independent internal audit of both finances and systems has been successfully completed by Internal Audit & Compliance Ltd.

Year end saw a slight increase in reserves. This was primarily due to unexpected increased income from the burial activity and savings on Tree works and the Open Space at Sheens Meadow. Reserves are within reasonable levels, particularly available reserves, due to £10K being held back for investigations into additional land for the burial ground which over time is filling up.

County Cllr Boyles report

COVID – Levels in the county continue to fall, remaining well below the South West and national averages.

The county council support to Gloucestershire care homes in the controlling the spread of Coronavirus, continues, and has distributed more than £500,000 additional funding. The money, part of a total of £6.6m the council has distributed so far, will be paid to care providers in the county so that they can prevent the spread of infection to some of our most vulnerable Gloucestershire residents.

Governments levelling up fund money - FODDC can bid for up to 20 Million pounds (from a £4.8 Billion fund). The District council will receive £125,000 from the Government to allow it to take professional advice and employ consultants to assist and advise and write the bid for the district to make sure that it is in line with the funds objectives which are. LEISURE TOURISM & FITNESS. And so, enhance the ability to be successful. The FODDC Cabinet have indicated that they intend to bid in the first round in June 21.

Libraries re-opened from April 12th -. Jane Everiss, head of Gloucestershire Libraries said “We can’t wait to welcome you back to our libraries and we have invested in lots of new stock ready for you to enjoy from 12 April.

“If you are visiting us, we have measures in place to keep you safe but if you can’t visit us yet, our online services are still available. We can’t wait to see you!”

All visits will be managed with social distancing and there will be a limit to how many people can be in the library at one time. If you have any questions about libraries reopening, including how cleaning and social distancing is being managed, Frequently Asked Questions are available on the library website. Customers will be asked for test and trace details and will be required to wear face coverings unless they are exempt.

Free school meals, Easter Holidays - The county council has committed extra funding to protect children from going hungry during the school holidays as a result of the Covid lockdown. Gloucestershire families in receipt of free school meals will be able to claim vouchers for both weeks of the holidays.

This is in addition to the Department for Education Holiday Activity Support already in place for the first week on the holidays. Families will still be entitled to this support, which includes meal packs and activities, but the council will now provide two weeks additional vouchers as well.

£1.35million boost for rural buses - Gloucestershire County Council has successfully bid for £1,352,000 towards improved rural transport in two pilot areas. The Forest of Dean and the North Cotswolds will benefit from bespoke minibus services as part of a pilot to bring affordable public transport to some of the most rural areas of the county.

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Community groups and projects

Red Telephone Box at the Green – A representative of the community group confirmed that a bank account had now been formally established and fund raising underway. To date over £580 had been raised. A contractor has been found who should be able to conduct repairs to the cast frame, replace the windows and repaint the box over the next three months. The group continue to work closely with the PC on the project.

Newnham on Severn Community Benefit Society George Café – A representative advised that the project to purchase the George café as a community asset was still active and an updated business plan (due to commercial changes in the Village) would be issued in the summer. Questions regarding the viability of the project were expressed as much of the initial content of the business plan (Café/shop/Post Office) has been affected by some activities relocating to the Ship Inn. It is felt by the group that there is a need for further community services such as a Business Hub, meeting rooms, Wifi and print facilities which are not currently available. It is also felt that the Village is large enough to support more than one café. Newnham live may also put on some events in the large meeting room when restrictions permit.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.40 p.m.

Clr N Hughes

Newnham parish council

Notes prepared by the Clerk

Commented [DT1]: