

Newtown Parish council
Hampshire

Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 19th April 2013 in Newtown Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present: Parish Councillors with Mrs Liz Ellis in the Chair
County Councillor, Mr Tom Thacker
Borough Councillor, Mr John Izett
Chairman of Village Hall Management Committee, Mr Doug Ellis
16 residents and guests

In Attendance: Clerk: Mrs K Summers

1. Welcome

Mrs Ellis welcomed those present and introduced members of the Parish Council, Borough Councillor John Izett and the new clerk Kathy Summers.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Tim Kelleher.

3. Approval of minutes

The minutes of the last Parish assembly on 13th April 2012 were approved by the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the last minutes.

5. Chairman's report

Tim Kelleher was elected last year and has now been Chairman of the Parish Council for a year.

The members of the common management committee have not changed in the year and are Roland Brandwood, Simon Melville, Sue Morris and Susan Wellman.

Kathy Summers was appointed as clerk in August last year.

Following the installation of the bollards on the B4640 last year we had hoped that the overgrown path to the east of that road would be cleared by now. Unfortunately due to very cold weather over the winter Hampshire highways are tied up dealing with potholes on the roads and so we will have to wait a little longer for this to be dealt with. We have however managed to get the hedges cut both sides of the C45 between the Church and the Swan so the road is a little wider and safer on that stretch.

We have started to put into action the revised Higher Level Stewardship Scheme which was approved at the public meeting in December 2011. The tree felling has caused a bit of a mess but it will recover in time and Wessex Woodland will be planting new hedging in the gap left by the machinery. Unfortunately it has not been planting weather up until now but we expect it to be done in the next two to three weeks. We had the bracken sprayed last summer and we should see the effect of this work this year. We have also had the heather cut again this year. Each year a different patch of heather is cut so that we have different ages of heather over the common. The parish council would also like to express it's thanks

to the volunteers who work on the common throughout the year. The work they do is invaluable.

We have had complaints that people are ignoring the notices on the common asking people to keep dogs on a lead during the bird nesting season. We are required to put up notices under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act and Hampshire County Council also expect us to do it. However if people ignore the notices then there is nothing we can do about it as it is not a criminal offence.

We planted the Jubilee Oak in October. The sapling was donated by HCC and we have a plaque which will be put up in due course to identify it.

The King George V Silver Jubilee seat (which was installed in 1935) is in need of renovation. It is currently near the bus stop but nobody sits on it there so it is proposed to move it to a new location outside the village hall where it will be of more use.

Finally, West Berkshire Council has recently issued a draft supplementary planning document in respect of the Sandleford development and the Parish Council will be commenting on this.

6. Report from John Izett (Borough Councillor)

It has been a very busy and interesting year. I have been asked to focus on matters to do with Newtown but unfortunately this is the parish with the least to do! However matters which seem to be of relevance to all parishes are drains, speeding and planning.

I was made the Cabinet member for Finance and Property last summer and my aim has been to ensure that the books are balanced and there is no increase to the rates. I have also been working on a plan for housing in the borough to take us up to 2029. This needs to be done because if there is no plan in place then developers have more freedom to build where they want. Housing needs are set by an Inspector, not by the council and are expected to be 13,140- 13,840 houses by 2029. It is very difficult determining where the new houses should go and the council has decided that they should be in Basingstoke and the larger settlements rather than the smaller villages. The council is placing increasing reliance on Neighbourhood Plans drawn up by villages such as Oakley, Overton, Kingsclere and St Mary Bourne to provide for housing to meet their own needs.

There will be a comprehensive review of settlement boundaries after the housing plan has been settled at the beginning of next year.

As regards Sandleford, they are now thinking of including an access on to the A339 but have not made a final decision. We need to consider whether s.106 money may be available to mitigate any traffic issues arising out of this.

The Bridge problem at Headley turned out to be not as bad as we thought it was going to be mainly because the representations we made meant that a state of the art traffic management system was used and plenty of slack was built into the timetable. This meant that it was finished two months early.

Finally Hampshire County Council has recently signed a £15m contract with BT for superfast Broadband.

8. Village Hall report

The Village Hall is run by a body of Trustees who are totally independent of the Parish Council. This year the floor has been cleaned and there is a new microwave. Everything is in good order including finances.

The Venture Club provides a very useful source of funds for maintaining the village hall. If you are not a member and would like to join please contact Ruth Ponting.

7. Report from Tom Thacker (County Councillor)

Reporting on the last year, the Beacon was lit and it was a very successful event; the Clere School has done very well and its GCSE results are in the top half this year and Council tax has been frozen this year.

The main concerns in my inbox are potholes although Hampshire has the best roads in the Southern Counties.

The Parish Council has been involved in the setting up of a Parish Lengthsman scheme for which approval has now been received. This is a cluster of ten Parishes who will each receive £1,000 (effectively six days work) to spend on roadside work. One Parish will receive an extra £1000 to cover the cost of administration for all ten Parishes.

Finally a large traffic survey is to be carried out which will look at road users (in particular HGV's to make sure they are using major routes) and road speeds in a large triangular area bounded by the A34 to the west, The A339 to the northeast and the A303 to the south.

9. Parish communication – website

A parish website is planned, so that agendas and minutes of meetings can be placed on line. At present residents have the right to ask the clerk if they want to see the minutes of meetings, this will enable people to access this information whenever they want. Hopefully the website will grow with more information but it is planned that most of the information will be unchanging (eg a history of Newtown) as the website will only be updated every couple of months when new minutes/agendas are ready. Notice boards will continue to be used for those residents without access to the internet. Those present were asked if there was anything they would particularly like to see on the website. Planning applications were mentioned and the village hall, although concern was raised about publishing private telephone numbers on the internet. There was general approval for the idea of a website.

10. Open forum

The following matters were raised:-

- a) Horse riders are using footpaths that they are not meant too and this is causing damage and very muddy conditions, signage seems to have disappeared.
New signs can be put up but they are only recommendations as horse riders have the right to go anywhere on the common.
- b) It was noted that various traffic calming measures had been carried on the straight part of the B4640 but traffic was still travelling too fast up the hill from the Swan, could the speed limit be reduced?
The parish council has asked in the past for the speed limit to be reduced but the response was that there are insufficient accidents on the road to warrant a reduction. Mr Thacker pointed out that the proposed traffic survey will include speed surveys.
- c) There is a blocked drain on the B4640 just south of the Horris Hill turn. When there is heavy rain the surface water runs down the Horris Hill road. The blocked drain on the C45 had been reported to highways. It was pointed out that this problem has been compounded by an overflowing ditch.

- d) The new broadband agreement with HCC was questioned; will it make any difference to Newtown as we get our service from Newbury which is in West Berks? Mr Izett undertook to look at this issue and respond to the questioner direct. Parish clerk to provide contact details
- e) The electricity board contractors working near Adbury had created a gap in the trees could something be done about this. This would be looked at.

Finally Mrs Ellis thanked everyone for attending and reminded those present that Newtown will be 800 years old in 2018.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Signed

Dated