

NEWTON IN THE ISLE

PARISH COUNCIL

Acting Clerk: Dave Gibbs, 358 High Road, Newton in the Isle, PE13 5HS
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Minutes of a meeting of Newton-in-the-Isle Parish Council held remotely on Tuesday 9th March 2021

074/21 Present

Cllr D Gibbs (Chairman and Acting Clerk), Cllr R Bradley, Cllr S Clark, Cllr E Jones, Cllr R Moore, Cllr D Nunn, Cllr G Wilkinson, Cllr S King (CCC)

075/21 Apologies for Absence

Cllr C Seaton (FDC)

076/20 Public Forum

No members of the public were present.

077/21 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman reported that Richard Scott, a former member of the Parish Council, had passed away. Members observed a minute's silence in his memory.

The Chairman read a letter of thanks from Mrs Patricia Wilkinson for the gift she received on her retirement following almost ten years as the Clerk.

078/21 Clerk to the Parish Council

Members considered options for the vacant position of Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer. It was agreed that an experienced Clerk was essential to the Council. Members noted that four neighbouring councils had experienced difficulty in filling vacancies. It was proposed by Cllr Moore, seconded by Cllr Wilkinson and carried unanimously to create an unpaid position of Clerk and to appoint David Gibbs to this role with immediate effect.

079/21 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- a) RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12th January 2021 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.
- b) There were no matters arising from the minutes, but the Chairman reported that the irrigation reservoir at Ferry Farm and the additional industrial unit in Roman Bank had both secured planning permission, and The Bothy in Church Lane has been granted a certificate of lawfulness. Matters relating to Oakhill, Fen Road, Croft Grange and the former Woadman's Arms, High Road remain unresolved.

080/21 County and District Councillors Reports

Cllr King reported that the Local Highways Improvement panel decisions will be ratified by the new Highways and Transport Committee at their June meeting. The final meeting of the

current committee approved minor alterations to the assessment criteria on added value for future rounds of the LHI scheme. They also approved a proposal to rethink the maintenance of roadside verges, offering greater local control and the possibility of more environmentally friendly planting regimes. The Chairman asked about the recent announcement of a cut in government funding for highway maintenance. Cllr King reported that the County Council is committed to increasing funding for highway maintenance, footpaths and flood prevention.

Cllr Clark reported that Covid rates in Fenland have been above the national and local average, but are now declining. A testing centre has been opened in the Queen Mary Centre to reduce workplace transmission, but travel to work remains a risk factor.

081/21 Police Matters

The Chairman reported that the March meeting had not yet taken place, but at the February meeting it was confirmed that PCSO's Dave Russ and Helen Norton-Smith will continue in their current roles. Catalytic convertor thefts have continued, but a recent arrest may reduce the frequency of these thefts. The Police are making increasing use of dashcam footage in the prosecution of motoring offences. There were a total of 26 crimes reported in Roman Bank ward in January, but none of these took place in Newton-in-the-Isle. Cllr Clark reported that snowdrop thefts have been mentioned on social media and a local newspaper reported an aggravated burglary in Wisbech St Mary.

082/21 Reports for Information

- a) Allotments/Rights of Way - Members noted Cllr Nunn's report. Cllr Bradley mentioned that rubble and waste building material had been used to fill holes in the track from Fen Road to the North Level Main Drain. The Clerk will visit and report to the next meeting.
- b) Highways/LHI - Members noted Cllr Clark's report. A request has been received for signs to warn of children playing in Chapel Lane. The Clerk will discuss this with the Highways Officer. Cllr Jones reported mud, gravel and other material on the surface in Brewers Lane. The whole road needs sweeping. The Clerk will discuss this with the Highways Officer and the possibility of installing Unsuitable for Heavy Vehicles signs or similar. Members discussed options to remove through traffic from Brewers Lane and Fen Road, but further consideration will be required. Members noted the encroachment of mud onto the High Road leading out of the village and Cllr Bradley agreed to inspect this. Members also discussed the junction of High Road, Fen Road and Mill Lane.

RESOLVED - to add further signage and road markings, including Give Way and Slow markings at the junction of High Road, Fen Road and Mill Lane.

The Chairman reported that he had presented the Local Highway Improvement application to the assessment panel, but their decision will not be ratified until June.

- c) Emergency Plan Update - Members noted Cllr Jones's report. The Chairman proposed that a working group be established to add further detail to the plan, including identifying the key individuals to be involved and the equipment to be used. The group will meet and report to the next meeting.
- d) Streetscape - Members noted Cllr Moore's report. He has spoken to the Handyman to establish a routine for grass cutting around the two benches on the High Road. The

Street Pride group has not been litter picking during lockdown, but will resume shortly. Cllr Jones reported that a number of dog walkers are using Brewers Lane, but there is no bin in that area.

RESOLVED - to install an additional dog bin at the junction of Brewers Lane and Fitton End Road.

Cllr Clark asked whether an additional bin could be installed in Chapel Lane, however no appropriate location was identified. It was also noted that some of the signage for the national cycle route through the village is missing or damaged. The Clerk will investigate and order appropriate replacements.

- e) Correspondence/Concerns - The Clerk reported on correspondence received, including the forthcoming National Census, a forum for Parish Councillors regarding the Cambridgeshire Home Energy Support Service (CHESS), and the establishment of Eastern Community Homes, a partnership of local authorities and housing providers led by Cambridgeshire ACRE.

083/21 Reports for Decisions

- a) Supporting Vulnerable Residents - The Chairman reminded members of the background to his report, the needs of an ageing community and lessons learned during the pandemic. He explained the different support mechanisms available and the desire at all levels to bring together the different tiers of local government in providing services. Members agreed to continue to consider the issues and to attend future virtual meetings with County and District Council officers to understand the network of supporting mechanisms being established.
- b) Playing Field - Cllr Wilkinson reported that a number of items remain to be completed in the Playing Field. The majority of the tree work has been carried out. The meadow has been strimmed, but the arisings have not been removed. The Clerk will contact the contractor. The undergrowth in the copse requires attention. The bird boxes need to be installed. The oak tree will be felled this month. Two silver birch trees have been donated to replace it. Members agreed to create a small memorial arboretum near the oak tree allowing further trees to be planted over time *in memoriam*. The first tree will be dedicated to Captain Sir Tom Moore. Cllr Clark reported that some younger residents had asked for a net for the football goals. Members asked her to clarify the goal size needed and whether one or both goals were used.

084/21 Finance

- a) Members received the financial report as at the end of February. The balance in the current account was £28,549.55 and the Business Saver account £12,048.72.
- b) Members approved the following payments

100689	HMRC (Income tax)	£ 34.60
100690	P Wilkinson (Salary £348.80, expenses £16.26)	£ 365.06
100691	Fenland Leisure Products Ltd (Play equipment)	£ 516.00
100692	CAPALC Ltd (Subscription)	£ 375.02
100693	D A Gibbs (Expenses)	<u>£ 113.95</u>
		£ 1,404.63

- c) Members discussed the format and content of the annual report to residents. Cllr Wilkinson offered to prepare a draft for approval at the next meeting.

085/21 Dates of Future Meetings

- a) The Annual Meeting of the Council will take place virtually on Tuesday 11 May, subject to the Government extending the concessions in the Coronavirus Act.
- b) Members resolved not to hold an Annual Parish Meeting this year, due to the lack of clarity over the legislation for the use of the Village Hall.