

Minutes of
Welsh Newton Annual Parish Meeting,
Held at Llanrothal Church
On Thursday 11th May 2023
At 7.00pm

Present: Cllr Martin Barter – as stand-in Chair of the Parish Council

In Attendance: Emma Thomas – Clerk to the Parish Council

Public: 2

1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs: Craig Bligh; Keith Simmons and Debbie Clarke

2 To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held 20th May 2022

The minutes were APPROVED and duly signed by the Chair

3 To receive the Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report

The following report was RECEIVED from Cllr Craig Bligh – Chair of the Group Parish Council:

Dear resident of Welsh Newton and Llanrothal, 2022 – 2023 has been a challenging time and this year I want to focus my comments more toward the “people” side.

There has been a continuation of some contentious planning issues, and sadly this has led to unpleasant pressure being applied to some Parish Councillors – a clear form of bullying. It's worth remembering that Parish councillors are fellow members of our community who are willing to donate their time and effort to help everyone throughout the year, not just on a single issue. Some topics are controversial, and some decisions will not satisfy all.

Parish councillors are required by law to protect the interests of all residents; to act within the rules and regulations that are laid down, to be impartial, to treat everyone with fairness and not to attend meetings having pre-determined conclusions – we must listen to the evidence.

These comments are in response to my deep frustration with some poor behaviour directed at Parish Councillors, and I sincerely hope that we do not have a repeat of this in the future.

However, to put matters into context, it's worth noting some of the achievements of the last couple of years – results that put your Parish Council at the forefront of Parish of Councils within our county;

- *Gained access to government grants totalling £38,000 this year for drainage and repair works.*
- *Two PC funded defibrillators – now 3 in the Welsh Newton and Llanrothal parishes.*
- *Shown caution with expenditure enabling the annual precept to remain unchanged for 2023/24 (very much against the national trend)*
- *Working within national guidelines – created a neighbourhood development plan to give local people a voice in all planning applications.*
- *Ensured that all planning applications reflect our development plan.*
- *Sought approval from residents of Welsh Newton Common for greater involvement of the PC in the management of Welsh Newton Common – which was overwhelmingly rejected.*
- *Took legal advice on a contentious issue and acted according to the advice, to avoid risk to the whole community.*
- *Supported the Queens Jubilee celebrations.*
- *Championed the improvement and renovation of the War Memorial and would like to thank our Parish Lengthsman who has donated his teams costs as a donation as a gesture of respect to our fallen men and women.*
- *Gaining reclassification of Welsh Newton common in the forthcoming county framework – a cause of much frustration.*
- *Initiating a new series of public talks enlightening us on the local environment, which we hope to develop over the next 12 months.*

Your parish councillors bring a cross section of skills from the environmental, senior business management and local government fields. We are very sorry to note the departure of Waqas Manzoor this year. Waqas enhanced the PC capability with his environmental knowledge and experience and took his role enthusiastically and showed great professionalism, we are very sorry to see Waqas go, but thank him for his invaluable service.

Waqas's departure creates an opportunity for us to welcome Sue Parkinson onto the PC. Sue has made a very strong contribution to the community over a number of years, and we know she will add great knowledge and enthusiasm to our group.

I wish to again acknowledge the outstanding contribution that our parish Clerk makes to the running of our meetings as well as the guidance and support to ensure that we remain fully aligned to our legal responsibilities, and that we take advantage of all opportunities for funding or support that may be available. I would also like to thank all members of the parish council who contribute their time, knowledge, and experience to ensure that we have a highly competent team. Additionally our thanks go to our parish lengthsman Terry Griffiths and his team for their outstanding work, especially with the ever decreasing budgets. His knowledge of the local environment and willingness to engage with all landowners is a tremendous asset.

When taken in context, much has been achieved and whilst challenges will always exist, the Parish Council is tasked with ensuring that local democracy has a fair and balanced voice, and whilst we are not complacent or arrogant, I believe that this is the case.

4 To receive the Ward Councillor's Report
Appendix 1 NOTED

5 Open discussion of parish matters

The following item was RAISED:

- Will the setting up of a Commons Committee be re-discussed? - *Yes it is due to be on the June agenda.*

The meeting closed at 19.10

Signed: _____ Dated: _____