

**Minutes of the Welsh Newton and Llanrothal Annual Parish Meetings,
Held at Welsh Newton Village Hall
On Thursday 20th May 2021
At 7.00pm**

This meeting may be recorded under Standing Orders 3I

Agendas ran concurrently

Present: Cllr Craig Bligh – Chair as Chair of Welsh Newton and Llanrothal Parish Council

In attendance: Emma Thomas – Parish Clerk

Public: 11

- 1 To receive apologies for absence**
Apologies were RECEIVED and accepted from
- 2 To receive the Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report**
The following report was RECEIVED:

As the COVID19 pressures recede, the cost-of-living pressures are increasing, so, whilst we return to a modified form of normality, we must be prepared for ongoing challenges. However, on the positive side, we now look forward to celebrating the Queens platinum Jubilee.

The Parish Council continues to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible against the continuing backdrop of limited funding.

Our role is to be an effective voice of the community - ensuring that everyone is "listened to" and treated fairly. The main areas of interest have been:

- Planning
- Roads and drainage
- Lengthman's activities
- Community care

Planning

Planning issues are an interesting element of our meetings. This year we have had some contentious issues to consider, which have led to us seek legal advice regarding the extent of our powers and the potential risks associated with certain courses of action. Whilst our decisions were frustrating to some, we have the legal and financial wellbeing of the Parish Council and therefore all Parishioners to consider; and this responsibility guided our decisions.

You may be aware that work to update the current Core Strategy is underway which will (amongst other things) define the delivery of rural housing until 2041. As the current hierarchy is based on surveys undertaken between 2009 and 2013 this needs updating as current assumptions adversely affect our Parish. Once Herefordshire Council complete their part, our Neighbourhood Development Plan will enter the next phase to align and better reflect local needs and views. In the meantime, we continue to see the benefit of having an adopted Neighbourhood development plan, with recent appeals making specific reference to our NDP when handing down their decisions.

Helping the community

The second Defibrillator, which was funded by the local community, is now installed, registered and operational at Welsh Newton Common and we will shortly be facilitating training events to ensure a high level of operational knowledge is spread throughout the whole Parish.

Roads and drains

Work has been completed on the £20k grant for essential drainage work and we have now applied and been awarded a further £4,600 for this financial year.

The Llanrothal road closure was a massive frustration to all, and whilst we used all available means to get our voice heard, this took 12 long months to be repaired. This debacle reflects the cumbersome and inflexible link between Balfour Beatty, HC and the local community when something extraordinary happens. Hopefully lessons have been learned.

Broadband

With the failure of the Gigaclear contract the council agreed to introduce the Digital Household Grant that will be made available to the 2,324 premises in the south of the county with a broadband connection of less than 30Mbps. This is a very welcome initiative.

Water quality and our local environment

Addressing the dramatic drop in the quality of our waterways is a vital cause that has been vigorously taken up by our Ward Councillor and The Parish Council is also endeavouring to promote understanding and engagement in our Parish. This is couple with a desire to increase the awareness of our local flora and fauna and to ensure that we engage and understand what we have and the need to protect our environment.

Lengthsman

The elimination the funding for the Lengthsman's scheme means that we have now committed to maintain the core services from our own funds. We seek additional funding where possible.

Team

We are sad to report that Councillor Steve Wilkes retired from the Parish Council after 19 years excellent service. Steve made a very strong contribution, and we would like to thank him for his outstanding service. Fortunately, we were able to recruit Rhiannon Marks and we now have a full complement of 4 Welsh Newton and 3 Llanrothal Councillors.

Once again, I would like to take the opportunity to record my gratitude to all members of the Parish Council for their professionalism and dedication during this challenging year.

As always, please continue to notify any Council member of issues or areas of concern and we will always assist where we can.

3 To receive the Ward Councillor's Report

The Ward Councillors report will be received at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

4 Open discussion of parish matters

The following items were RAISED:

- What impact will the planning issues raised in the Queen's speech have on local planning?
As yet this is unknown – we will have to wait and see. The Parish Council, as always, will keep parishioners informed.

The meeting closed at 19.16

Signed: _____



Dated: 11.5.23