



WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Welsh Newton & Llanrothal Group Parish Council held on Thursday 30th May at 7.30pm in Welsh Newton Village Hall

Present

Councillors: Craig Bligh (Chairman), Sue Parkinson (Vice Chair), Martin Barter, Keith Simmons, Debbie Clarke until 9:30pm.

In attendance:

Andrée Mitchell (Clerk/RFO), Terry Griffiths (Lengthsman), PCSOs (from 7:45pm to 8:03pm), Elissa Swinglehurst (Ward Councillor until 9:30pm).

Public: Six members of the public (two were present at the end of the meeting)

The meeting opened at 7:30 pm

1. To elect the Chairman of the Council

Cllr Bligh opened the meeting and requested nominations for the position of Chairman for the forthcoming year. Cllr Bligh was proposed by Cllr Barter, seconded by Cllr Parkinson. There were no other nominations.

It was RESOLVED: to elect Cllr Bligh to the position of Chairman. Cllr Bligh signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2. To elect the Vice-Chairman of the Council

Cllr Parkinson was proposed by Cllr Simmons, seconded by Cllr Barter.

It was RESOLVED: to elect Cllr Parkinson to the position of Vice Chair.

3. Apologies for absence: There were none. All current councillors were present.

4. To receive any declarations of interest or written applications for dispensation on agenda items

Cllr Parkinson declared pecuniary interest in agenda item 17 – Noticeboards. The Declarations of Interest book was signed accordingly.

Written requests for dispensations: there were none.

5. To remind councillors to update their Register of Interests form to Herefordshire Council

Councillors confirmed that no changes were required.

It was RESOLVED: that the Clerk contact the Monitoring Officer regarding the register of interests for each Councillor not showing on the Herefordshire Council website.

Signed by the Chairman: *Craig Bligh*

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6. Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 18th April 2024

It was RESOLVED: to approve the minutes as a true and proper record of the meeting.
The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

7. To note the attendance record of councillors at meetings during 2023-24

The attendance record for 2023/24 **was NOTED.** (Appendix 1)

It was NOTED that: the meetings in January and March 2024 were cancelled due to being inquorate which highlighted the need to fill the two Welsh Newton vacancies.

8. Public Question Time:

8.1. A member of the public involved with the Welsh Newton village hall advised that they had received the free portrait of King Charles III to go up in the hall which had been ordered for them by the former clerk.

8.2. Cllr Clarke advised that several residents had spoken to her about an overhanging hedgerow by Steepways field on Welsh Newton Common. The hedgerow is encroaching over the track and larger vehicles are causing erosion of the bank opposite the hedgerow when driving through. Cllr Clarke also raised the concern that vehicles such as the bin lorries and oil delivery trucks may refuse to access the seven properties served by the track if there were a risk to their vehicles. The hedge owner, who was one of the members of the public, had not previously been approached about this and Cllr Clarke advised she had been asked to mediate on behalf of the residents.

It was NOTED: that there are Dormice in the hedge which are a protected species so care needs to be taken with trimming the hedge, but the owner confirmed that branches could be removed if they were unsafe.

It was NOTED: that during the bird nesting season it is illegal to cut hedges, but the owner would be happy to employ the hedge cutter who cuts most of the hedges on the Common in season.

It was RESOLVED that: Cllr Clarke would provide the contact details of the local hedge cutter to enable the hedges to be cut during the cutting season and would liaise with the owner of the hedge to identify those branches that needed to be cut back as a priority due to safety to vehicles on the track.

8.3. A member of the public raised a query about the number of telegraph poles being put up/replaced on Welsh Newton Common. It was established that this was likely to be linked to the renewal of telegraph poles, possibly in preparation for installation of high-speed fibre broadband as there had been a high take up of the recent offer. The Ward Councillor will contact the programme manager at BT Openreach and contact the Clerk with regards to progress.

8.4. David Alexander (PCSO) and Ben Davidson (Police Constable) attended from the Safer Neighbourhood Team based at Ross Police Station. They advised that a spate of incidents had taken place between 22nd May and 25th May in neighbouring areas including Glewstone, Llangrove, Llangarron where equipment and vehicles had been taken. The Chair recommended that Members

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and residents subscribe to the Neighbourhood Matters alert service. The officers offered to come and make a presentation on Smart Water and offer a marking service for equipment and bicycles. **It was RESOLVED:** that the clerk would refresh the details of the Neighbourhood Matters on the council website and that consideration would be given to how to raise the matter of Smart water and security in the parish.

9. Reports

9.1. Ward Councillors Report: The Ward Councillor was present and gave a verbal report:

- Details of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) funding has just come through
- Drainage fund Expressions were due in (the Council has submitted one)
- The leader of the Council has been re-elected at the Herefordshire Council Annual Meeting
- Over the last year the budget deficit has reduced from £13.8M to £8M – Maintaining front office services with mainly back office being affected by cuts
- Starting to see some improvement in children's services
- Trying to restart the bypass
- Library is going to move into Shire Hall
- More money being put into filling the holes in the roads
- Environment/Ecology – need to have a plan and developing the baseline, working with partners such as the Wildlife Trust.

10. Planning:

10.1. To note the status of planning applications since the last meeting:

10.1.1. Application P240766/FH - Upper Newton Farm, Welsh Newton, Monmouth, Herefordshire NP25 5RN, Proposed single storey garden room with an oak framed structure with slate covered roof.

It was NOTED: that the application was approved with conditions.

10.2. To receive an update and agree actions on other planning issues:

10.2.1. Track in Tump Wood ancient Woodland

Herefordshire Council planning enforcement have received a retrospective planning application re the track in Tump Wood and it is being validated. Concerns were raised about the impact on the ecology as well as the ancient woodland. Also, possible environmental protection breach.

It was RESOLVED: that the clerk will check the application when it becomes available for a referral for an ecology report and consultation and to contact the Herefordshire Council Tree Officer.

10.2.2. Possible change of use from pasture to Woodland in Llanrothal

The Herefordshire Council planning enforcement officer had written to say that he was not concerned about a change of use from pastureland to woodland as it is not a material change of use. However, he would be concerned if the owners started creating trackways, which would require planning permission. He will be looking at the new accessways with respect to drainage being installed.

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It was RESOLVED: that Cllr Parkinson will contact the Herefordshire Meadows Group and investigate who best to contact, e.g. Natural England and the Forestry Commission, and will check the relevant legislation and pass details to the Clerk.

10.2.3. Consultation re holiday lets in the parish

Reviewed planning application P220500/F on Herefordshire site which was approved in 2022. The parish council clerk at the time is given as a consultee, however, this didn't reach the council for comment. There are email exchanges with planning asking about this application and precedent set.

It was RESOLVED: that the clerk chase up on the potential precedent set with respect to the provision of the holiday cabins/lets having previously refused such applications.

11. Welsh Newton Common

11.1. Market Bridle Path DMMO update

The clerk reported that there appear to be no DMMOs for the Market Path WNN10 on maps on the Herefordshire Council website, but the pack of information and evidence is in the Parish Council files. The request is to change the footpath element to a bridleway - 2019.

It was RESOLVED: to resubmit the DMMO to Herefordshire Council

11.2. Tree Maintenance on the Common

A concern had been raised by a resident with the former Clerk about the safety of some trees – the last emails were just before the February meeting so didn't make that agenda.

The original query had related to insurance issues regarding trees close to a property which has since been resolved.

There was a general discussion about the Tree Protection Order (TPO) over the common and what it covers. There was agreement about the need to seek clarification about the trees and maintenance of them on the common, especially in the light of Ash dieback and the proliferation of Sycamore sapling. Cllr Simmons identified that the TPO in questions as TPO #52.

It was RESOLVED: to seek clarification on the TPO on the trees on the common and the process for managing work on the trees if it is needed.

11.3. Motorcycles using bridle paths on the Common

It was RESOLVED: to investigate the possibility of grant funding for "no motorcycle" signage.

12. Policies, codes, and procedures

12.1. To consider and adopt/readopt Standing Orders

It was RESOLVED: to readopt the current Standing Orders with the change from 14 days to 3 days for distribution of yearend and accounts papers to Councillors in advance of approval, as recommended by HALC.

12.2. To consider and adopt/readopt Code of Conduct

It was RESOLVED: that the Council readopt the Council's current Code of Conduct and consider the adoption of the Herefordshire Code of Conduct during the coming year.

It was RESOLVED: to clarify the situation about the status of the Council's ability to operate under the General Power of Competence.

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12.3. To consider an update on Financial Regulations

NALC have issued new financial regulations which are significantly different to previous versions. It is intended that this will come to the next meeting.

12.4. To consider the future review and adoption of other policies

It was RESOLVED: that the current policies and procedures will be adopted while a review takes place over the financial year to ensure they are in line with up-to-date guidance and legal requirements.

13. Finance

13.1. It was NOTED: that the Parish Council's bank balances are:

- Lloyds – Treasurers Account: £9,479.95 (3 May 2024 statement)
- Lloyds – Business Bank Instant: £6,955.16 (as of the 9th May 2024)
- Cambridge and Counties Bank: £10,000.00 (1-year fixed rate bond deposited July 2023)

It was RESOLVED: that the Chairman will contact Cambridge and Counties Bank to clarify the process and rates with respect to the bond coming to the end of its term.

It was RESOLVED: that the Chairman will contact Lloyds Bank to investigate the status and outstanding requirements to add Councillors as signatories and enable the clerk/RFO to have view access to the Council's Bank Accounts.

13.2. To review the council's insurance policy, decide term and amendments required

The council's three-year policy with Clear Councils (formerly BHIB) is due for renewal 1st June 2024. A three-year quote had been requested but was not significantly different to the quote for one year.

It was RESOLVED: that the council renew the policy with Clear Councils (formerly BHIB) for one year and consider alternative providers for 2025/2026.

13.3. It was RESOLVED that the following payments be made:

13.3.1. Clerks April & May salary – as per agreed contract

13.3.2. HMRC PAYE for April & May 2024 – £153.68

13.3.3. Clear Councils Insurance – £557.76 for a single year.

13.3.4. To consider and note other payments and financial transactions as needed.

13.3.4.1. Internal Audit Appointment

The internal auditor who had been appointed at the start of the financial year to carry out the internal audit for 2023/2024 is no longer available. Further to advice from HALC the clerk sought alternative options which were presented to councillors.

It was RESOLVED: to appoint Theresa Goss, an independent parish clerk and internal auditor, to carry out the internal audit for 2023/2024 and the appointment contract was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

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14. To consider an update on defibrillators throughout the parish

All the defibrillators are installed and registered. There are volunteers in each area are checking batteries and pads.

15. To consider the DEFRA rural communities green spaces grant

There was a discussion about what green spaces might be available in the parish including at Llanrothal church or on the Common.

It was RESOLVED: that the clerk forward a link to the documentation related to the Green Spaces grant to Members for consideration.

16. To consider an update on the Participatory Budgeting scheme

Briefing notes had been distributed on the practical aspects and examples of participatory budgets. It was agreed that a task and finish group could take this forward.

It was RESOLVED: that Cllr Parkinson and Cllr Barter investigate the Participatory Budget scheme further and report back to the Council.

17. To consider noticeboards throughout the parish

The existing noticeboards, particularly the wooden ones, are in a poor state of repair and affected by condensation. The one at the entrance to Common is locked and not accessible. There was a discussion about the location of the noticeboards, the different options and usage of the boards.

Cllr Clarke gave her apologies and left at 9:20pm

It was RESOLVED: that the Clerk request a quotation from the local carpenter for the repair of the board at the church and the replacement of the board at the bus stop on Welsh Newton Common.

18. Lengthsman & footpaths

18.1. To consider work to be carried out by the lengthsman

Cllr Simmons highlighted a concern about damage to a culvert in Llanrothal. This has been raised with the highways team at Herefordshire Council by the Ward Councillor.

It was RESOLVED: that Cllr Simmons will forward the Ward Councillor's email to the clerk and that the clerk will chase up on the report of damage to the culvert.

The lengthsman reported that he is awaiting confirmation of the routine maintenance programme. His records indicate eight days on the highways and two days on the public rights of way road access.

The clerk reported on a call with the Head of Highways and Traffic at Herefordshire Council. The Council been emailed a copy of the lengthsman's contract. Currently the grant funding available will be core funding of £2,184 and matched funding of £1,092. The drainage funding scheme details has not yet come through, and the PRow funding proposals have just come out.

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The lengthsman team have been working on the parish assets and parish furniture following “no mow May” and in the area of the War Memorial.

It was **RESOLVED**: that the lengthsman work should be carried on as for 2023/2024 while work is done to clarify the schedule and funding.

It was RESOLVED: that the Chairman will contact the Llanrothal resident about the installation of the signs being held by the lengthsman and notify the clerk of the details.

The lengthsman advised that he will put forward a proposal for all the footpaths’ routine maintenance. Also, will look at using the Jubilee path as a template for replacing the stiles using kissing gates and self-closing gates to make it more accessible.

Cllr Parkinson volunteered to identify stiles in poor repair.

19. Highways

19.1. To consider road issues for reporting to Balfour Beatty

It was NOTED: that Balfour Beatty have been filling potholes in Llanrothal and in Welsh Newton Common.

A Speed Indicator Device is not working.

It was RESOLVED: that the clerk locate the contract and warranty.

19.2. To consider the verges to be submitted to Balfour Beatty as only requiring one cut this year.

The verges list was reviewed with no additions required.

20. Correspondence

HALC Wise Owl training – free spaces for some of the councillor training.

Survey from Cambridge & Counties Bank

21. To consider the outstanding actions and updates

No additional actions/updates.

22. To consider items for the next meeting – No discussion

No additional items.

23. Date of the Next Meeting: Thursday 20th June at Llanrothal Church

The meeting closed at 10 pm.

Signed by the Chairman: *Craig Bligh*

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