

22.8.6 Any Other Business

The Clerk gave notice of the date of the forthcoming Annual Assembly – 4th April 2011 in the Sixth Form block of the Community School at 7.30 pm.

This concluded the business of the meeting and it was declared closed at 8.50 pm.

NEWENT TOWN COUNCIL

Planning applications received from the Forest of Dean District Council for consideration by Newent Town Council at its meeting on Monday 14 March 2011.

1. DF6736 P2225/10/COU Mr H Midwinter, Newent Converters, Former Packing Station, Strawberry Hill, Newent
Extend existing mixed use site to include Office B1(a), Light Industrial B1(c), Storage or Distribution B8 Revised plans.

Comment No Objection

2 DF492 P0336/11/FUL Mr M Brandon, 7 Knights Crescent, Newent
Alterations and single storey extension to dwelling

Comment No Objection

3. DF642 P0400/11/OUT M F Freeman Group, Ruardean Works, Varnister Rd, North Drybrook, Glos
Phase 5 Newent Business Park, Gloucester St, Newent, GL18 1DZ
Outline application – erection of a food store

Comment Strongly Object. This is an industrial estate – not retail. The viability of the centre of Newent would be drastically affected by this application. The nearby garage/shop – the only fuel supplier in the town, would also be detrimentally affected. There is also no evidence of a survey of shopping practice having been undertaken.

4. DF3908 P0268/11/FUL Mr J Lightowler, Box Borders, Ross Rd, Ledbury
Building plot to rear of The Rookery, Graces Pitch, Newent, Glos
Variation of condition (04) of planning permission P0884/10/FUL to allow revision to approved landscape plan. REVISED plans

Comment Object – as before.

5. DF9517 P2394/10/FUL Three Choirs Vineyards Ltd, Baldwins Farm, Castle Tump, Newent
Alterations and extension to existing shop REVISED plans

Comment No Objection

A. *It is a long, complicated and on-going process, the pace of which is not in the Town Council's control*

3. Can Cllr Lawton enlighten Newent Town Council on how they might put pressure on the District Council to fulfil their obligation and avoid further unrest within the community, and also to save Council officers from complete humiliation should the issue of Southend Lane give rise to further Inquiries?

A. *The Town Council will keep in communication with the District Council putting pressure on them that it wishes to see an acceptable outcome*

4. Is Cllr Lawton able to reassure Newent Town Council that the Planning Inspector's decision will be robustly enforced following 31.1.12, if the gypsies fail to leave voluntarily? Has the District Council got protocol in place to deal with the enforcement?

A. *Cllr Lawton would reassure you that he is giving this matter his utmost priority and is working towards this ultimate goal. He is not able to give further information about the detail of this at this stage however, given the legality and confidential nature of the matter..*

5. Can Cllr Lawton find out why the Forest of Dean District Council put a Stop Notice on the site to prevent them from laying tarmac, **after** the job had been completed, when they had been notified on previous days that this was going to happen?

A. *The District Council had to ensure the paperwork appertaining to the Stop Notice was undertaken with absolute accuracy. It was essential that it was worded perfectly otherwise it enabled the recipient to take legal action against the Authority. Cllr Lawton was ensuring that in future such paperwork was ready in place to issue, should a similar situation occur again.*

22.8.5 Representative Reports

Representative reports were received from Cllr Tweedie:-

1. Forest Welcome Programme – Cllr Tweedie reminded the Council that it was to be updated on the Expression of Interest and felt that the Council should support and assist this in any way it could.
2. Emergency Planning – Cllr Tweedie advised that the public had been invited to come along to discuss this matter and to volunteer if they so desired to be part of this process. The event hadn't been well attended but Cllr Tweedie advised there was a sufficient involvement of people to take the process forward.

£10,256.01

22.7 Correspondence

22.7.1 Picklenash Jnr/Glebe Infant Schools – consultation on proposal for federation between schools

Members unanimously agreed they were in favour of the proposal for federation between the two schools.

22.8 Business

22.8.1 Planning applications – see attached

22.8.2 Town Centre Developments – update

See under “matters arising from minute”

22.8.3 Newent Initiative Trust - update

Cllr Beard advised that it had come to their attention there was another Forest town wanting to secure the headquarters of Two Rivers Housing Association. He, together with the Mayor, Cllr Street and Cllr Lawton had subsequently met with Two Rivers chiefs to lobby for Newent and to put across their enthusiasm for them to come to this area. Cllr Beard said that following the meeting he was quietly confident that Two Rivers Housing would relocate to Newent as planned.

Joe Meek – Cllr Beard advised the Heritage were to unveil a new “Blue plaque” at No.1 Market Square on April 2011 at 12 noon. The Clerk advised that a formal invitation had been received to the Mayor and Councillors to attend. Cllrs Blick and Lawton agreed they would attend.

22.8.4 Travellers – Southend Lane

Members were furnished with questions from Newent Raid c/o Professor Ray Hodgson regarding the Traveller site in Southend Lane and responses were made as follows:-

1. Can Newent ask the Forest of Dean District Council why the Leader of the Council has failed to call a meeting of the Board set up last July/Aug and move the process of site creation forward?

A. District Cllr L Lawton: *Business meetings have taken place in this regard*

2. Does Newent Town Council feel that it is entirely acceptable for the Council to take almost a year to make the initial forward momentum, knowing that the whole process of site creation will be long and arduous anyway?

Matters Arising

P.204 10.1.2 request for signage re dogs at Newent Arboretum

Cllr Wellington advised that since a decision had been taken not to erect signage re dogs, a further incident had occurred where a local walker's dog had been bitten by another dog off the lead. Cllr Wellington believed following this latest incident that this matter should be reconsidered. Cllr Offord proposed that he should seek three signatures to bring this matter back on the agenda within the six month rule.

P.205 10.1.4 Appeal for lopping of tree at Lakeside

The Clerk advised that Mr Unwin (Arborculturalist) had recently met with the Foreman to look at a number of trees in and around the Lake area. He had been asked to look at this particular tree given the request that the branch be removed due to it dropping seedlings that were causing a nuisance to the adjacent property owner. Mr Unwin's opinion was that the removal of the branch would not in fact rectify the problem as seedlings would still continue to fall from other areas of the tree. The Clerk advised this was a situation similar to an earlier request from another property owner who complained of tree debris falling from an adjacent Oak tree at Lakeside where the Council had deemed no action be taken. In the circumstances it was agreed that the branch not be removed.

P.205 Coleford MCTi – Heritage Developer project

Cllr Tweedie reminded Members of a list of identified features of heritage interest around Newent which had been derived from a meeting in January. He advised it was important that Members scrutinised this list to see if it is comprehensive and complete as it was his view this was not the case given the small turnout of people who had attended the meeting.

P.209 10.2.7 Traffic calming Culver St – Cllr Beard

Cllr Beard advised that County Cllr W Windsor-Clive had visited the site in question in Culver Street and taken photographs of the steps and the crossing. The Clerk advised that he had at last responded to her emails and had confirmed he had been on site and had got back to his County Council Officer – Mr Richard Gray. He advised that unfortunately that anywhere could be a place where an accident is waiting to happen and this is being flagged up all over the County. They are struggling with reduced budgets and a high expectation and having spoken to Officers they do not feel their data is out of date but will look at signs. Members noted this information but agreed to continue to pursue this matter and keep it highlighted.

22.6 Finance & Sundry Payments

Finance & Sundry Payments were approved and considered legal to a figure of

Cllr Lawton advised that the District Council had agreed to fund the CCTV operation for a further 12 months, which he believed was particularly useful given the current situation with the possible loss of the local Police Station. He asked however that the Council be mindful in that it had budgeted a sum of money for taking over the CCTV in next year's budget which would not be needed immediately given these circumstances but warned against using these funds for other purposes given the temporary extension of funding. This was noted.

P.194 20.8.4 Town Centre Improvements

Cllr Wellington referred to the Safety Audit received from the County Council.

Cllr Blick declared an interest and refrained from discussion on this matter. He stepped down as Chair and asked for another Member to take the Chair. Cllr Tweedie volunteered to do so and it was unanimously agreed that he should take the Chair for the remainder of discussion on this matter. Cllr Lawton proposed that a copy of the Safety Audit be sent to Stage Coach and that they be asked for their comments on it. This was agreed by 8 votes in favour 1 against. Cllr Beard advised that the Town Centre developments were still proceeding satisfactorily in the meantime.

22.4 To give approval to minutes of Council meeting – 28 February 2011 (Planning)

Approval of the minutes of the Council meeting (Planning) of 28 February 2011 was proposed by Cllr Blick and unanimously agreed after the following amendment:-

Present – *insert* Cllr W Offord

22.5 Committee Reports

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Approval of the minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee of 28 February 2011 was proposed by Cllr Lawton, seconded by Cllr Beard and unanimously agreed.

Recreation & Environment Committee

Approval of the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation & Environment Committee of 28 February 2011 was proposed by Cllr Wellington, seconded by Cllr Blick and unanimously agreed after the following amendment:-

Delete as being present: Cllr P Street

He generally was very unhappy about the situation and would be utilising his colleagues at the County Council to put forward this concerns to the Chief Constable.

Cllr Beard spoke in favour of using the Community Centre as a base for the Police. He advised he had had negotiations with Waterwells the Police Headquarters and representatives from there had looked at rooms at the Community Centre to ascertain their suitability. Cllr Beard advised the rooms had their own entrance, were lockable with kitchen facilities. He believed from the feedback he had received from the general public he had engaged with, they would prefer to see the Police housed in the Community Centre rather than at the Fire Station which had been flagged as a possible alternative. Cllr Beard added that he thought the Library was not suitable for the Police, and it was unfair on the Officers who would have to work from there.

Cllr Tweedie questioned the venue of the Community Centre given the uncertainty of its future. Cllr Beard said they were looking for a 99 year lease as they wish to have security of tenure, and in this regard were currently negotiating with Gloucestershire County Council, owners of the building. Cllr Beard advised that when eventually the Community building was sold, the users of the building could move with the Police to an alternative building, of which he had ideas of where this might be. Cllr Moore added that the Community Centre also had the advantage of parking facilities which would be important to the Police.

Cllr Blick put forward a proposal to take to the public meeting the following week which stated Newent Town Council does not wish to see the Police moving away from Newent and will do everything possible to obtain a local facility capable of housing IT and CCTV links for the benefit of the Police. This was unanimously agreed.

22.2 To give approval to minutes of Council meeting – 14 February 2011

Approval to the minutes of the Council meeting of 14 February 2011 was proposed by Cllr Beard, seconded by Cllr Moore and unanimously agreed.

22.3 Matters Arising

P.189 20.7.1 Dog Control Order at the Lake

Cllr Wood advised that it was his understanding that some dog walkers were continuing to walk their dogs around the Lake unleashed, particularly early in the morning. It was agreed to ask the Dog Warden to patrol the area at this time.

P.192 20.8.2 CCTV

if they had to do this at Cinderford this would not necessarily be an issue. However, given they had considerable IT work to do which required a base, they did not want to be going back and forth to Cinderford wasting time during shift to do this. She would be happy to have a lockable room in Newent where IT facilities were available which she felt would suffice.

Cllr Blick thanked the Sgt for attending the meeting and for giving Members the opportunity of putting their questions and concerns to her.

22.1 To give consideration to proposed Police changes – Cllr Blick

Cllr Blick advised that he had recently attended a meeting with Superintendent P Haynes in Coleford and he had assured him then that no decisions had been made with regard to the possible changes regarding the Policing and removal of the Police Station in Newent. He had since heard through what he believed to be a reliable source that the Police Station would in fact be closing on Sunday 20 March. Cllr Blick said he has since had further confirmation via a telephone conversation with Superintendent Haynes that day, that no decision regarding Policing and the removal of the Police Station in Newent would be made until after public consultation at an open meeting on Monday 21st March had taken place.

Cllr Blick said that he wished to establish the Council's view with regard to the possible closure of the Police Station and the effect this would have on the public of Newent in order to put this across to the Police Authority at the impending public meeting. His own overall view was that it was essential for the Police to have a base in Newent particularly in order that they could carry out their IT work which was an integral part of their job.

Cllr Lawton advised that he had had discussions with both Senior Officers and local Officers and had through the Clerk asked several pertinent questions in writing of Superintendent Haynes regarding this matter. He believed the answers that were received were little more than a public relations exercise. He believed he had missed the point more than once and had been somewhat disingenuous with regard to no decision having been made with regard to the closure of the Police Station, in so far as he (Cllr Lawton) was fully aware that the Officers in Newent had been instructed on 11th March to clear their lockers. Cllr Lawton went on to say that the response from Superintendent Haynes had clearly stated consultation with local Officers had taken place, yet he knew as at three days ago this consultation had in fact not taken place. Officers locally that he had spoken to had felt very left out, very upset and disengaged from what was going on. They felt undermined in their tasks locally. Cllr Lawton said he felt it was very unfair for them to be treated in this way. He believed a fait accompli was being presented to everyone concerned.

Cllr Lawton referred again to Superintendent Haynes' response and asked why had the Police not explored other alternative sites to house the Police in a suitable base? He suggested the Town Council Offices or the Fire Station as possible suitable Police Points but that they had not even been approached.

Cllr Beard asked if anyone had been arrested for lead theft that had been happening in Newent of late? Sgt Lynch-Warden was not able to confirm but said that the theft of lead in the area was a targeted area because of the increase in its value. The Police were working on this and had arrested someone red handed in Gloucester the previous week. Cllr Beard added that it appeared most of these sorts of crime happened late into the night and asked if the Police were active during these hours? The Sgt answered that if a particular area of concern was being targeted, their variable shift patterns and hours allowed them to work beyond their regular shifts.

Cllr Lawton asked Sgt Lynch-Warden what it was she thought the Police were doing to achieve the detection rates their statistics showed? She replied in terms of local Officers, they were patrolling local areas, they were having briefings which told them where to be and when, they are aware of who they are looking for, they have a lot of information. Information about action taken is fed into their computer system so their Line-Managers can see if something has been missed which might lead to detection. Any crime that develops into a series of crime can be linked together so that multiple detections can be made. They also have an Intelligence Unit – analysing crime trends. Police today is very much about Intelligence led.

Cllr Lawton went on to ask how would she expect the removal of the Police Station to affect crime and crime detection in the future. Sgt Lynch-Warden replied that whilst she could not predict this, if they were provided with a suitable alternative venue from which to work, she would expect to provide a better service from 1 April than before. This is because instead of having one dedicated Officer and a team of Response Officers starting from Newent, there will be a team of Response Officers starting from Coleford covering the whole Forest area as well as Safer Community Team Officers starting from Newent.

Cllr Wood advised that he had recently stumbled upon poachers and dogs in the area which he had reported to the Police. He understood that in Lincolnshire and other counties the Police in such circumstances took away their equipment and asked what Gloucestershire Police view was on this type of crime? Sgt Lynch-Warden advised that what normally happens is that the offenders would be arrested and bailed, or taken into custody and charged. Sometimes they use their discretion where their equipment is taken from them and given to the landowner.

Cllr Wellington asked the Sgt how the Police worked out the amount of police time that was needed in Newent in terms of staffing was needed? The Sgt advised there was a matrix for the Force in terms of Staff each area is allocated. It was based on supply and demand. Newent has five Officers, a Sergeant and four PCSO's.

Cllr Blick asked if Sgt Lynch-Warden had any personal thoughts on the impending changes that were likely to take place regarding Policing in Newent in the future?

Sgt Lynch-Warden advised that if the Police Station closed in Newent they would prefer to have a base in Newent that they book on and off shift from but

NEWENT TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Newent Town Council held on Monday 14 March 2011 at the Market House, Newent at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllr D Blick (Mayor), Cllr W Offord, Cllr M Greening, Cllr L Lawton, Cllr P Moore, Cllr R Pilkington, Cllr S Tweedie, Cllr B Wellington, Cllr E Wood

Apologies: Cllr P Street, Cllr A Parsons, Cllr Mrs K Draper

Cllr Blick asked those present to fall silent to reflect upon the plight of the victims of the tsunami in Japan which had taken place a few days before.

22.00 Sgt Rachel Lynch-Warden, Gloucestershire Police was in attendance to address Members about local Policing issues.

Sgt Lynch-Warden advised Members of local Crime statistics during the period 1 April 2010 – 13 March 2011. During this time 474 crimes had been recorded, a 17% drop on the 574 figure last year. Violence had dropped by 23%, Burglary had dropped by 11%, Theft had dropped by 10% and Damage had dropped by 31%. Detection rate for burglary was 11% up from 6% last year, Violence 50% up from 46% last year and Damage 16% a drop from 24% last year.

Members were invited to ask questions of the Sergeant.

Cllr Moore congratulated the Police on the improving figures but said that there was a thought that if there was reduced crime in the area, it was acceptable to take away the Police. He believed the Council should fight very hard for the retention of the Police Station and not let anyone convince Members that these figures had been attained for any other reason than the Police were present in the town fighting crime.

Cllr Tweedie asked if there was any data regarding the distribution of crime around the town?

Sgt Lynch-Warden advised that the biggest proportion of crime was in central Newent where 196 crimes were recorded out of the 474 crimes in total.

Cllr Offord asked if the Sgt could confirm incidents of crime being solved as a direct result of Officers being out on the beat. The Sgt replied that sometimes this was just a case of being in the right place at the right time but that the statistics gathered were used for targeting situations where the crime was likely to be. In Newent this appeared to be in the early evenings.

Cllr Pilkington asked if there was a feel for whether there has been an increase or decrease in the crimes that are reported? The Sgt replied that the only way to tell would be to look at the difference between their crime statistics and those of the British Crimes survey.