

Newton-in-the-Isle Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of the Parish of Newton-in-the-Isle held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 22nd May 2024

Present - Cllr R Bradley (Chairman), Cllr S Clark, Cllr K Humphris, Cllr R Moore, Cllr B Simpson, Cllr K Simpson, D Gibbs (Clerk), 10 parishioners.

1/24 Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting and outlined the agenda.

2/24 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr A Clark, Cllr S King (CCC), Mr & Mrs Argent

3/24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24th May 2023 were agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

4/24 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5/24 Parish Council Report

The Chairman outlined the achievements of the Parish Council since the last meeting.

At the 2023 election, Cllrs Jones, Moore, Nunn and Wilkinson opted not to seek re-election. Cllrs Jones and Moore subsequently rejoined the Council, but Cllrs Jones and Freeman later resigned. The Chairman thanked them all for their contributions to the work of the Council. In their places, the Council welcomed Cllrs B Simpson, K Simpson, A Clark and K Humphris.

During the year, the Council has considered eleven planning applications, and made contact with the owner of the former school site to discuss future use. A new path was laid to the roadside bench on the High Road opposite Fen Road and the bench was replaced. Two new noticeboards were installed. Dead and weak trees in the arboretum were replaced.

The Local Highways Improvements project to extend the speed limits at both ends of the village and install new signage was completed and an application was submitted to reduce the speed limit to 20mph in the core of the village. The Council reported many highways and street lighting defects to the County Council and District Council respectively and liaised with the Police on crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Chairman thanked all members of the Council for their commitment and support during the year and offered special thanks to the Clerk.

6/24 Parish Council Future Plans

Cllr Moore outlined some of the Council's future plans.

The Council continues with the programme of gradual replacement of the street lights with more energy-efficient LED lights. Discussions are ongoing about the possible winter closure

of the byways to the west of the parish. Options for the future use of the vacant allotments in the village are under consideration. The improvement plans for the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field to encourage wider use are being costed to enable funding to be identified. Plans are also afoot to improve the areas around the public benches on the High Road, with the new Handyman now looking after these locations. As the Chairman reported, the Council continues to work with the owner of the former school site. The Council is also working with neighbouring councils to compile evidence to encourage the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to reshape the village bus service to meet the needs of the local communities. Finally, the Council is lobbying Clarion Housing Group to bring empty properties back into use.

7/24 Your Village Hall

Sam Clark, Trustee of the Village Hall, read a report from the Chair of the Management Committee. The Committee continues to organise events to raise funds. There is a Friendship Lunch on the first Thursday of every month and Sunday Lunches monthly from September to March.

Plans for this year include another Village Fayre in July, as well as quizzes, Apple Day, International Evenings and the Christmas Fayre. The Committee would like to hire out the Hall more often, but faces competition from other local halls. Meanwhile the Committee will continue to arrange events to raise money to maintain the Hall.

8/24 Soap Box Presentations

Ladies Club - Margaret Gibbs spoke about the Ladies Club that meets on the third Tuesday of every month, offering talks, quizzes, outings and a Christmas Party. Their motto is "Fun, Friendship and Support" and everybody is welcome. The Club has just celebrated its 30th anniversary with a meal in a local restaurant.

Gardening Club - Neil Horswood explained that the Gardening Club meets monthly on the second Sunday, except Remembrance Sunday. The Club has 27 members, around half of whom live in Newton. The programme offers speakers, outings, a sale of plants, a produce show and an annual barbecue. The first meeting for new members is free.

Street Pride - David Gibbs outlined the work of the Street Pride group, whose monthly Litter Picks remove large quantities of litter and other waste along the side of the roads in the village. Litter Picks take place on the last Tuesday of each month and new volunteers are always welcome. All equipment is provided and further details are published in the newsletter. Street Pride groups also take part in environmental improvement projects, such as tidy-ups, planting schemes etc, so the group would like suggestions for suitable projects in the village.

St James' Church - David Gibbs outlined plans for the Parish Church following its recent closure for regular services. The community survey will ask residents' views on the church and seek volunteers to form an Action Group to develop ideas for the future use of the building and to seek funding for the necessary repairs and improvements.

9/24 Ask Your Council

The last community survey was a long time ago. Is it time for a new one? The Council agreed at its last meeting to set up a working group to consider this.

When will the new houses be built on the former Woadman's Arms site? We don't know, but hope to have more information soon.

Why are green field planning applications supported when there are brownfield sites available in the village? Each application must be considered on its merits. An application cannot be rejected solely because another site would be preferable.

What will happen to the Church now? The Church can only be saved as a community building if it has the support of a large number of people. Examples from elsewhere include dual use for religious and community events and activities. Shop and/or pub are possible uses. If it lacks support or no suitable use can be found for it, it will be advertised for sale. Ultimately, redevelopment of the site remains a possibility.

10/24 Closing Remarks

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending the meeting. He felt that it had provided an important opportunity for constructive dialogue. He stressed the importance of the church survey and asked everyone to encourage friends and neighbours to respond. Finally, he encouraged those attending to volunteer for some of the community projects seeking new faces.

11/24 Date of Next Meeting

The next Annual Parish Meeting will take place on Wednesday 28th May 2025.