

Minutes of Upleadon Parish Council Annual Parish Assembly held on Thursday 02 March 2023 at Upleadon Village Hall at 8.05 pm

Present: Cllr M Manning (Chairman) Cllr Mrs P Turner, Cllr Mrs W Fabian, Cllr T Rickard, Cllr P Dallow, Cllr E Wood, Cllr H Dunn

Also present: District Cllr P Burford, County Cllr Mrs G Moseley

Apologies: Cllr B Lewis

There were three Members of the Parish present

1. Approval of Minutes of Annual Assembly meeting – 05 May 2022

Cllr Dallow proposed approval of the Minutes of the Annual Assembly meeting of 05 May 2022 which was seconded by Cllr Mrs Turner and unanimously agreed.

2. Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising

3. To receive report from Parish Council Chairman

Cllr Manning was elected as Chairman for 2022/23. Cllr Wood elected as Deputy Chairman. The Council meet four times a year but this year we have had no less than **9** meetings, mainly due to additional planning applications that can be received at any time of the year and which the Parish Council is consulted upon.

The Parish Council is coming to the end of its four year term in May 2023 when all Councillors have to stand down and put themselves forward by nomination for re-election to the Council. There may be others who wish to stand too and if there are more candidates standing than there are seats then the Parish will have an Election. If on the other hand, there are less than seven people standing there will be vacant seat(s) and the Council will be able to co-opt interested parties to the Council by its voting process. It is worth noting that if an Election is called, when voting the electorate will need to produce photo ID, something new that has been introduced this year. More information about this is available from the Electoral Services Department at FoDDC.

During this financial year it was the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and celebrations took place in the Village to mark this occasion. The Parish Council paid for the printing of leaflets detailing the various events throughout the Bank holiday weekend and also the framing of the Village photograph taken to mark the occasion.

The Council was also instrumental in refurbishing the public footpath which runs from Gloucester Road to Forge Lane – a very useful path which avoids having to walk around the Cross and the hazards of passing traffic. The Parish Council along with Public Rights of Way at Glos County Council together with a generous contribution from County Cllr Mrs Gill

Moseley's budget, found sufficient funding to refurbish the path. A maintenance plan has been organised to keep the path in good condition. Its refurbishment was dedicated to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and a plaque has been affixed to the entrance to the path to show this.

The Parish Council considered 7 planning applications during the year. A meeting took place on 9 June 2022 to facilitate public discussion on a proposed Solar farm on the edge of the Parish in Stream Lane. Pathfinder Clean Energy gave a presentation and there were a number of parishioners in attendance. The Council refrained from any comment until it was officially consulted by way of a planning application. When the Council subsequently received the application it agreed to object to it on the numerous grounds. The application is yet to be decided by the Planning Authority.

The Council was also consulted on the Forest of Dean District Council Local Plan 2021-2041 Second Preferred Option and considered a number of questions in relation to planning for the future.

A Casual vacancy was created in July of last year following the resignation of Cllr Mrs Pauline Cooke. An election was not called and the vacancy was filled by co-option in September by Cllr Tim Rickard.

I would like to take the opportunity of thanking our District and County Councillors attendance and for giving their reports on the work of their respective Authorities.

The Parish Council's existing Councillors step down from Office on 8 May, – and the new Council takes Office on 9<sup>th</sup> which may or may not have existing Members and looks forward to working with and on behalf of its Parish for a further four year term. Anyone interested in standing for the Parish Council please contact the Clerk for further information.

4. To receive report from District Councillor Philip Burford

With District and Parish Elections shortly taking place, Cllr Burford looked back over the past four years and commented on the various challenges including the now common Zoom and Teams meetings which were new to many at the beginning of the Covid pandemic. The Levelling Up fund brought £20M to the Forest of Dean, £10M of which went to Hartpur College, £9.6M towards rebuilding the Leisure Centre at Coleford and £400K to the centre of Cinderford. Climate Change, biodiversity and the environment are key issues. The Council has made investments in property over the last four year which will help with regeneration. The Council has recently approved its budget for the forthcoming year, which doesn't use any of its reserves. It has been a challenging four years, but the Forest of Dea has done better than many other Councils.

5. To receive report from County Councillor Mrs Gill Moseley

Cllr Mrs Moseley gave a written report – see attached.

## County Councillor Report – Gill Moseley

### Budget for 2023/24

Proposals put forward by the Conservative majority administration for £567m were passed in February. This represents a £46m increase on 22/23 levels. For a band D property, this will mean a monthly increase of £6.04. It is made up of 2.99% increase on council tax and a 2% precept for adult social care.

Amendments by all three opposition parties were accepted. These included the following from my Group:

£80,000 – Grit Bin and Winter Resilience Fund

Members to work with local communities to identify the places needed for grit bins, and to work with Parish, Town and District Councils, and schools, to ensure the bins are put into the correct locations, and to discuss arrangements for the filling of them in future years. Members to be asked after 6 months if they plan to use the funding, with unspent allocations then redistributed around the Members who need top-up funding. £1.500 is suggested for each division with any unused funds redistributed where need is greatest.

£400,000 – Road Safety Additional Measures

To be spent on reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. The Road Safety Capital Investment is set at £400,000 per year for next three years, in line with the Road Safety Policy 2022-32. This additional funding is to enable what would have been implemented over 3 years to take place in year 1.

(£100K is also earmarked for extra TRO funding. This was the Conservatives' own amendment. The result, we believe, of the pressure we brought to bear on the matter in scrutiny and in our own proposed amendment.)

£75,000 – Pilot project on social isolation and alcohol

£100,00 - Support for Walking

For supporting walking, specifically around local shopping "parades" where pavement faults cause disproportionate difficulties for people who rely on their local shops (and knock-on effects for the local economy).

£25,000 – Public Right of Way

Increasing the resource available for mapping so people know which walking routes are available to them.

£75,000 – Children's Services Spend to Save, Looking at What Works in Demand Management

To commission a piece of research to look nationally at models from Councils which have managed to manage demand, thus cutting entrants into the Children-in-Care community.

### Local Bus Transport

The GCC (our local Transport Authority) failed in its bid to win government funding for its Bus Service Improvement Plan. However, officers in the Integrated Transport Unit have done their best to restore some of the most drastic cuts in countywide services made by Stagecoach, begun a year ago with the 132/32 Ledbury and Ross service beyond Newent.. Problems persist with lack of bus drivers but the Newent-based Buses4Us community action group, supported by the ITU, Herefordshire

council and all the town and parish councils along the route as well as businesses and individuals has raised the £250K needed to reinstate the service which should start in early April with a two hourly service throughout the day including Sundays, with additional evening services on Friday and Saturday.

### **Road Safety Policy**

A joint fund of £600K has been set up between the Police and Crime Commissioner and the County Council to enable communities to take action through Speedwatch Groups and parish councils to improve road safety in their local areas. The closing dates are now past for applications but there is still help available through the CARS toolkit and other channels. More funding may arrive in the next financial year. Current bids are still being processed for equipment such as VAS signs and speed cameras.

Traffic Regulation Orders which are needed for the installation of speed limits have received a funding boost but there is a shortage of staff to process these orders which cost at least £10K which is usually shared between the GCC and the local parish/town council. Several similar orders may be batched together to save costs.

### **Highways Local Fund**

Various projects have been supported such as the new foot and cycle bridge over the ford in Whitehouse lane between Kilcot and Oxenhall, footpath renewal, the installation of kissing gates the repair of pavements and new signage. £30K is usually available for each division per annum. There are ten parishes in Newent division.

### **Rural Estates Working Group**

GCC owns a number of farms across the county and has set up a working group of which I am a member to review their management and future in the light of the Climate Emergency and its current policy of potential disposal of a proportion of the estate. It met for the first time on April 1<sup>st</sup> and will continue for six months before making recommendations to the administration regarding its Strategic Estates Plan.

### **Build Back Better – Councillor Scheme**

Out of the £40K for the term of office (until 2025) approximately £9K remains, but potential bids for much of this amount are in the offing. The scheme has been widely circulated and most parishes have taken advantage of the grant to a greater or lesser extent. Various projects that cover the FoDDC or are based in Newent which have wider take-up, have also been supported. Further bids are welcome but modest bids are more likely to be successful at this point.

### **Committees**

I am a member of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and as the Spokesperson for the Environment for my Group, I have regular quarterly meetings with the Head of Services, Colin Chick and other senior officers. These meetings are also attended by my colleagues who have responsibilities for Traffic and Transport, and Economic Growth.

I also sit on the GCC Planning Committee which meets less frequently to consider applications in the areas of education, waste management and mineral extraction.

I am also a member of the Constitution Committee which oversees the governance of the council. My group successfully proposed some changes to the protocol of the Environment Scrutiny Committee where important office reports have been noted but questions were discouraged.

**Any Questions?**

Please feel free to contact me about these or any other matters.

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6. To receive questions from the public regarding the Council's activities during the financial year 2022/23 and any issues relating to parish matters

There were no questions/comments from the public

In the absence of any further business the meeting was declared closed at 8.35 pm.

