

Minutes of Upleadon Parish Council Annual Parish Assembly held on Thursday 06 March 2025 at Upleadon Village Hall at 8.15 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: County Cllr Mrs G Moseley, District Cllr P Burford

Apologies: None

There were no Members of the public present

1. Approval of Minutes of Annual Assembly meeting – 14 March 2024

Cllr Wood proposed approval of the Minutes of the Annual Assembly meeting of 14 March 2024 which was seconded by Cllr Dallow and unanimously agreed.

Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising

2. To receive report from Parish Council Chairman

Cllr Manning gave his report on the year's activities:-

1. The Council was asked by the Forest of Dean District Council to consider extending the Village envelope – SHELAA.

Members discussed with District Cllr Burford the possibility of extending the village envelope to allow some new housing to enable younger people growing up in the village to be able to stay in the area. Members acknowledged the limited availability of land but nevertheless felt the need to provide for the next generation. Cllr Burford was of the opinion that it was unlikely that the village envelope would be extended as there were not enough village services to support this.

2. Agreed to specific objectives and to take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity as required under the Model Biodiversity Policy and unanimously agreed to adopt it.
3. The Council discussed the Forest of Dean District Council consultation on the Draft District Plan. They commented that this is an opportunity to look at the Village envelope again and the potential for affordable housing. The Parish Council would appreciate a consultation with the Strategic Housing Officer and they also pointed out that the Plan depicts Upleadon as having a population of 108. This is incorrect – the Parish Council believes the population to be in the region of 250.

The Parish Council also commented on the planning application for mixed use development including up to 375 houses in Newent. It suggested relocating the

Secondary school in Watery Lane to this site and building some of the housing on the then vacant site which would be much more central to the town and occupants would be much more likely to stay in Newent. The proposed new site access to the centre much quieter in Watery Lane rather than Gloucester Street. The proposed new site could occupy the new school, new doctors' surgery, possibly new primary school, and more business opportunities. This would fit in with the existing business park adjacent to the site.

4. The Parish Council gave a response to the National Assoc Local Council's survey on Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other planning reforms. Members were asked to consider a number of questions and to explain their responses to the Government's proposed updates to the National Planning Policy. They responded that whilst we acknowledge the good reasons for having a five year land supply, that supply should be linked to local needs and not to global requirements and should always abide by the guidelines for sustainable development. Grey belt land, a new designation, is most likely to be affected by the immediate problems of sustaining any small scale development. For the most part they are likely to be small infill pockets facing the typically awkward challenges of transport and other infrastructure issues.
 5. Members considered and approved a Grant Awarding policy and also reviewed its Internal Controls policy and the Model Publication Scheme.
 6. The Council agreed specific objectives and to take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity as required under the Model Biodiversity policy
 7. It was agreed to purchase a new noticeboard, due to the poor condition of the existing one. It is made of aluminium and will be affixed in the bus shelter at the Cross. There has been some delay in obtaining it due to the Company no longer accepting cheques.
 8. The Parish Council considered a number of Planning applications throughout the year including the proposed Solar Farm in Stream Lane. This application was refused by the Planning Dept of the FoDDC and was subsequently appealed by the application. The appeal was refused.
 9. The Council considered its budget for the forthcoming year in December and agreed to request a Precept of £5000. The increase on last year was for the holding a small reserve and for unforeseen expenditure ie future Elections.
 10. The Council continues to monitor and service the Defibrillator set on the wall of the Village Hall – it recently having replaced its battery.
3. Report from District Councillor Philip Burford

Cllr Burford reported that the District Council had set its Budget for the forthcoming year at £13M, an increase of £1M on last year. Single item of increase – Employers N.I which has increased in excess of half a million pounds. This has resulted in an overall 3% increase in Council tax.

Cllr Burford gave a report on the Five Acres Leisure Centre which the Council purchased for £1 and has since spent £1.5M. The cost of building has gone up by multi millions of pounds. Still an empty site.

He advised that the Council was considering the Biosphere reserve and that some Cllrs wanted Biosphere designation to protect the environment and culture. He considered a danger of protecting the core, gives a tendency to push development outwards.

Devolution – tier 2 authorities will cease to exist and tier 1 authorities to be unitary.

At County level – the Government was asked to delay the next County Council elections to May 2026, but this was not accepted and these will take place in May 2025 as originally planned.

It is being suggested that smaller – Parish Councils are likely to be merged together to form bigger Councils, and only four of these will be based around the Forest towns.

4. Report from County Councillor Mrs Gill Moseley

Budget for 2025/26

Proposals put forward by the Conservative majority administration for £650m, an increase of £32m over the last financial year were passed in February. For a band D property, this will mean a monthly increase of £6.65. It is made up of 2.99% increase on council tax and a 2% precept for adult social care. The Conservative administration boasts that this is one of the lowest precepts for a county council in the country.

Amendments by all three opposition parties were proposed, but only those from The Green Party were passed in exchange for an agreed pledge to vote for the budget as a whole. The Conservative majority is very slim.

Local Bus Transport

A second tranche of BSIP funding has been granted and is being put towards extending the Robin bookable bus service in this area of the county.

Road Safety Policy

There have been problems with The Road Safety Partnership roll-out due to a severe shortage and turnover of staff.

Highways Local Fund

This funding continues to be available and suggestions for small projects are welcome.

Build Back Better – Councillor Scheme

My fund is now spent to the last penny. Initially the Conservative administration did not allow for this or any similar fund to continue in the next financial year, but have now drawn back on that decision. A further £20K is to be allocated to each County Councillor which is half of the previous sum, but this reflects the forthcoming two-year term of office from May 1st as the Local Government Re-organisation is carried out under the White Paper Devolution proposals. There may be restrictions on the type of projects which qualify. There is talk of it being directed to Highways safety rather than community initiatives, but the Liberal Democrat Group will resist any such proposals. Repairs and improvements should be funded through revenue budget allocation.

Committees

I remain 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 than the monthly FoDDC Development Management Committee 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.

Any Questions?

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

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This concluded the business of the meeting was declared closed at 8.55 pm.