



Purpose of the report

To give details of the achievements of the Parish Council over the last 12 months and to set out the Council's priorities for 2022/2023.

Newtown Linford Parish Council is made up of 7 members, 4 being the quorum number of decision making.

Your Parish Councillors

Councillor Sue Pritchard (Chairman)

Councillor Tim Porte (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Sue Greasley

Councillor Robert Haylock

Councillor Vicki Lightfoot

Councillor Tara Pickles

Vacancy to be filled by Co-option following the resignation of Councillor Stuart Eyre in January 2022.

Your Parish Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer and Registrar of Burials

Mrs Hannah Shaw
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Overview

Over the past twelve months, the Parish Council and its staff have continued to play an active role in day-to-day life in Newtown Linford, maintaining high quality standards in our areas of responsibility and developing working relationships with residents and partners. In May 2021, we saw the return of face-to-face Parish Council meetings following the Covid-19 pandemic. Parish Councillors are proud that business continued as normal through the use of virtual meetings during national and local lockdowns.

Newtown Linford Parish Council are responsible for the upkeep of:

- All Saints' Closed Churchyard, Bradgate Road
- The Bob Bown Memorial Field and Play Park, Grey Crescent
- The Newtown Linford Cemetery, Groby Lane
- 55 street lighting columns on Bradgate Road, Groby Lane, Main Street and Markfield Lane and many items of street furniture as detailed in our Asset Register, which is reviewed annually.

We continue to ensure these assets are kept in good repair for the benefit of the residents of Newtown Linford and look for ways in which we can develop and improve these areas.

The Parish Council provides a Christmas tree at the Village Hall each year and were encouraged by the continued Advent Windows initiative which was again well supported by residents across the Parish. Our thanks go to resident, Ruth Brutnall who originally instigated the idea in 2020 and continued to organise the event in 2021.

Chairman, Sue Pritchard, attends to the Village troughs regularly throughout the year and tends to some areas of the Cemetery on Groby Lane, including the planting of spring bulbs.

Sadly, in 2021, a change in structural testing requirements of Parish Council owned streetlights, meant the village hanging baskets, which are usually displayed at three locations on Bradgate Road and Groby Lane and the flower tower at the Village Hall, were not able to go ahead, as the cost associated with the revised testing requirements, meant our order became unviable. As this has affected a number of parishes within Leicestershire, Leicestershire County Council are now looking at providing a service themselves at a more preferential rate and we hope to see the return of the Parish Council funded floral display in 2023.

Main Achievements between April 2021 and March 2022

There have been a number of notable events and achievements over the last 12 months:

Bob Bown

- Following an informal consultation with park users, the Parish Council successfully applied to the National Lottery Awards for All for a £10,000 grant to fund an all-encompassing modular play unit and basket swing. The installation and associated works were carried out in June 2021.
- A small area of the Bob Bown Memorial Field is currently being left unmown to rewild, particularly as this area is on the edge of an ancient woodland where bluebells are currently in bloom.
- The Parish Clerk has worked with Charnwood Borough Council on behalf of residents living on Grey Crescent who use the access track to the garages at the Bob Bown Memorial Field. This had been an ongoing issue for many years, however, the potholes have now been filled, a Sycamore tree at risk of falling has been felled and all blocked drains have now been cleared of debris and are free flowing.
- Charnwood Borough Council have drafted new Heads of Terms for a 21 year lease of the Bob Bown Memorial Field. Rent has been agreed at £300 per annum and the Parish Council's Solicitor is currently working on our behalf to complete the agreement.

Cemetery & Churchyard

- Following the collapse of the Churchyard wall in December 2020, the Parish Council have worked in partnership with Bradgate Park Trust, whose Rangers have very kindly rebuilt the wall as a good neighbourly gesture in March 2022.
- A review of the Grounds Maintenance Contract for all three Parish Council maintained sites was conducted in December 2021. We were pleased to appoint Michael Liggins of Firetree who commenced the grass cutting schedule for the 2022/23 period in March. Our new arrangement is

saving the Parish Council £950 per annum, whilst including additional services such as hedge trimming and weed control. Firetree are committed to carrying out grounds maintenance without the need for pesticides, which can be harmful to the environment and wildlife.

- Following the fell of a multi-stemmed poplar tree at the Cemetery, the Parish Council appointed Sculptor, Peter Leadbeater, to work his magic in creating an 'Eternal Light' art form from the remaining tree trunk. Residents very kindly donated 50% of the cost of the sculpture. Some logs have been retained and placed around the Cemetery providing habitats for wildlife.
- Following a number of comments received regarding difficulty in opening and closing the Cemetery gates, wheels have been fitted to aid movement and remedial repairs have been carried out.
- A review of our Grants of Exclusive Rights of Burial at the Cemetery on Groby Lane was conducted during 2021 and grants have been updated in accordance with more recent legislation.

Highways & Road Safety

- The Parish Council were integral in driving forward the need for waiting restrictions around the Parish following an increase in visitors to the village during the pandemic. Following a consultation in November 2020, approved proposals were implemented across the Parish which have had a hugely positive impact on resolving both parking problems within the village and dangerous and inconsiderate parking that was occurring on roads surrounding the three Bradgate Park entrances. The new restrictions came into force on 02/04/21 and in December 2021, there was some revocation of double yellow line restrictions on Main Street, following complaints from residents with limited off road parking. We are proud to have worked in partnership with LCC, Borough and County Councillors and Leicestershire Police and continue to monitor the impacts of the new restrictions.
- NLPC have continued to work in partnership with Leicestershire Police regarding speeding affecting many areas of the parish, including Bradgate Road, Main Street, Markfield Lane and Roecliffe Road. Police speed check operations were carried out in September and November 2021, as well as further covert operations. Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Tim Porte recently analysed the VAS data from all units and has reported his findings in the Village Magazine and at Parish Council meetings.

Organisations

- The Parish Council have been proud to support Newtown Linford Biodiversity group who formed in 2021, by successfully applying to Leicestershire County Council for a SHIRE Environment Grant for the installation of bat and bird boxes and hedgehog hotels. Following an informal consultation with residents via the Parish Council's Facebook page, this was extended to include owl boxes and insect hotels. £591 of funding was granted and the boxes are being installed during May and June 2022. The Clerk attends regularly meetings in an advisory capacity and the group are currently working on mapping wildlife and wildflowers in the Parish to assist the Parish Council. NLPC also funded a Newtown Linford Biodiversity Open Evening held at the Village Hall in October 2021.
- The Parish Council Chairman continues to attend Village Hall Committee meetings as a representative of Newtown Linford Parish Council, who are the custodian trustee for the Village Hall. NLPC are currently negotiating a rent review with APB, the agents working on behalf of the Village Hall owner. It is expected a large rent increase will be imposed and will be back dated to

September 2021. The Parish Council will continue to support the Village Hall Committee to ensure this important village asset remains viable.

- A regular 'Monday Marketing' continues to be posted on the Parish Council's Facebook page, which gives every local business and organisation represented on the group, a bi-weekly opportunity to advertise their services, menus, opening hours and updates etc.

Parish Council Business

- Approximately 44 planning applications have been considered during Parish Council meetings and comments submitted through Charnwood Borough Council's Planning Portal. The Parish Council Chairman spoke at Charnwood Borough Council Plans Committee and both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman spoke on two separate occasions at the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Planning Committee, in objection to a planning application for land at Ashby Road, Markfield, for a residential development of up to 93 dwellings, public open space, landscaping and associated works. These cross boundary proposals were refused planning permission.
- Following a Duty of Care Tree Inspection which was carried out in March 2021 at the three Parish Council maintained sites, the Parish Council appointed a suitably qualified arboriculturist to carry out tree works that had been highlighted.
- An Annual Governance review has been carried out again in 2022 and revised Parish Council policies and procedures will be considered for adoption at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May. New policies for consideration by Councillors include a Biodiversity policy, Social Media policy and a Training and Development policy. NLPC will also be considering adoption of a new Members' Code of Conduct in line with other Councils and a Scheme of Delegation to the Parish Clerk. Our Standing Orders have also been updated to reflect the changes to dispensation requests in the new Members' Code of Conduct.
- The Parish Council responded to an Electoral Review of Charnwood conducted by The Local Government Boundary Commission in favour of keeping Charnwood boundaries unchanged.
- A review of the Council's public and employer's liability insurance was carried out in 2021 and a new 3 year agreement was arranged through BHIB Council Insurance.
- The Parish Council's Facebook group has increased to almost 400 members. Through this, more residents from harder to reach areas of the Parish are becoming involved in village activity.
- Engagement continues with residents regarding many topics through regular updates on our website, social media and through village magazine articles.
- The Council resolved at a meeting in 2021 to apply to register the Village Hall as an Asset of Community Value following the current rent review. Assets of Community Value and the Community Right to Bid, offers greater opportunity for communities to keep such buildings in public use and ensure they remain a social hub for the community.

Village

- The Parish Council have extended the number of verges registered with the LCC's Urban Wildflower Verge Scheme. Newtown Linford Biodiversity now look after verges on Markfield Lane and Groby Lane. Bird boxes and insect hotels have been installed at these locations and both verges have had NatureSpot Wild Space Surveys carried out. Details of the surveys can be viewed on the NatureSpot website and the Parish Council fund the continuation of these dedicated webpages.
- Further support has been given to Newtown Linford Biodiversity in supporting the planting of lavender outside the Village Hall.
- Further flood defences have been issued to a number of properties on Grey Crescent at risk of flooding. A supply of flood defences are available at the Village Hall in the event of further flooding emergencies.
- Two Parish Council owned streetlights have been converted to LED lanterns to help reduce carbon footprint.

Key Priorities for 2022/2023

Bob Bown

- The Parish Council will continue to explore available funding opportunities to further improve the Bob Bown Memorial Field and Play Park, following the installation of new equipment which was installed in June 2021. The Clerk is currently consulting with park users and parents on an item of equipment the Parish Council would like to fund in commemoration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee year.

Cemetery & Churchyard

- Newtown Linford Parish Council would like to explore the possibility of a Garden of Remembrance for the scattering of ashes at the Cemetery on Groby Lane, which would provide a more cost effective service to both residents and non-residents.
- Following the rebuild of the stone wall at the Churchyard, the Clerk is looking into the possibility of the removal of a self-settled, multi stemmed yew bush to prevent damage to edging stones of a raised section and to open up the area to provide more seating.

Highways & Road Safety

- Following the implementation of waiting restrictions in Newtown Linford and the areas surrounding the three Bradgate Park entrances in March 2021, the Parish Council will continue to monitor the impacts and address any issues arising, including the possibility of bollard installation in areas where pavement driving may continue.
- The Parish Council will continue to monitor incidents of fly-tipping at key hot spot areas and will consider the option of reducing or adding signage to a number of known 'vehicle pull-ins' that are now covered by double yellow lines.

- Following issues with low lighting affecting the Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) on Bradgate Road, the Parish Council would like to explore the possibility of purchasing a mobile VAS sign which can be moved to various locations along that stretch of road and relocate the existing VAS sign to the 40mph limit on Markfield Lane where speeding issues have been highlighted. If funds don't allow this again in the 2022/2023 period, we will consider flashing speed limit signs attached to street lighting columns where legislation allows. There is also the possibility changes to our current VAS units, maybe funded through the LCC Members' Highways Fund and we currently await an update.
- County Councillor, Deborah Taylor, has recently informed NLPC that a request for Members' Highway Funding for new Parish Welcome Signs has been successful and work is now in progress. Funding has also been allocated to purchasing post and rail fencing for the verges registered under the Urban Wildflower Verge Scheme. Watch this space!

Organisations

- The Parish Council will continue to offer grants of up to £500 each to Village organisations, currently limited to two grants in total per financial year. Please see our Grant Awarding Policy Terms and Conditions for further details.
- An increase in the Clerk's contractual hours has been agreed to assist the Village Hall Committee with bookings and marketing from 01/06/22, following an increase in gas and electric charges which have quadrupled in recent months. It is hoped with improved marketing, Village Hall bookings will increase and in turn, income generation.

Parish Council Business

- Newtown Linford Parish Council will continue to maintain and develop its existing assets and to consider acquiring further assets which would be beneficial to the Village and the people of Newtown Linford. The Clerk plans to carry out a full review of the Parish Council's Asset Register in preparation for the 2022/23 Annual Accountability and Governance Review.
- Planning applications will continue to be considered at Parish Council meetings and comments submitted to case officers at Charnwood Borough Council.
- The Parish Council will regularly review their budget and will keep any increase to the precept to a minimum where possible, whilst maintaining between 3 and 12 month running costs in reserve.

Village

- As structural testing is carried out on Parish Council street lighting columns and where the need for repairs are required, the Parish Council will continue to upgrade lanterns to LED to reduce our carbon footprint.

Financial Information

In order to maintain Parish Council reserves between 3 and 12 month running costs, the precept for the 2022/2023 financial period has been set to £56,779 which is an increase of 4.5% on the previous year. For Band D properties, this equates to a £4.56 rise or 9p a week.

The precept set and Council tax Base rates for the current and previous three financial years' are detailed below:

2019/20 Base number of properties 533.9 divided into precept of £51,000 = £95.52
 2020/21 Base number of properties 542.8 divided into precept of £51,500 = £94.88
 2021/22 Base number of properties 532.3 divided into precept of £54,075 = £101.59

2022/23 Base number of properties 534.9 divided into precept of £56,779 = £106.15

Parish Councillors discussed at length the increase in precept and other variants of a 3 year budget plan were considered. Every effort was made to keep an increase to a minimum, however, Parish Council reserves will be considerably reduced in the forthcoming year due to a number of factors as follows:

- 1) £15,000 has been committed towards the cost of the Traffic Regulation Order implemented for Newtown Linford Parish.
- 2) Our current lease on the Bob Bown Memorial Field is due to be terminated and a new lease issued, resulting in an annual rent of £300. We pay a 50p rent per year on our current lease.
- 3) The new lease on the Bob Bown Memorial Field may result in legal fees payable by the Parish Council.
- 4) A new piece of play equipment will be purchased for the Bob Bown Memorial Field in commemoration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Year.
- 5) Street lighting maintenance outside of our agreement with LCC has been budgeted at £1,500.00. The Parish Council owns 55 street lights which may require work following structural testing etc. In the past year, two street lighting columns have required either replacement or LED conversion. The Management Recharge for the 2022/23 financial year is £4,470.
- 6) A Village Hall rent review was due in 2021 and it is expected the rent will be increased and back dated. Initially, the agent requested a 160% increase at £4,550 but negotiations are still ongoing. As Custodian Trustee of the Village Hall, the Parish Council currently pay £1,750 per annum.

The following is a summary of unaudited income and expenditure for the 2021/2022 financial period and includes the sum of £54,075 raised as part of the precept (Council Tax):

Area	Expenditure	Income
Administration including staff costs	£16,175.95	£54,075.00
Bob Bown Memorial Field	£16,749.96	-
Cemetery	£10,227.00	£8,261.00
All Saints' Closed Churchyard	£5,768.45	-
Street Lighting	£8,871.48	-
Village Hall Rent & Maintenance	£1,843.00	-
Village Magazine Donation 2022	£650.00	-
Village Maintenance	£502.00	-
PWLB Loan Repayments	£4,936.12	-

Newtown Linford Parish Council Staff

Newtown Linford Parish Council employ one member of staff, Mrs Hannah Shaw, who is the Parish Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer and Registrar of Burials who works 20 hours per week, increasing to 21 hours per week from 1st June 2022.

Our seasonal grounds maintenance team is an external contractor and we employ the services of a handy person for occasional work at the three Parish Council maintained sites.

Parish Council Meetings

Newtown Linford Parish Council hold 10 or 11 meetings per year, including the Annual Parish Council Meeting and the Annual Parish Meeting in May each year.

Public and Press are invited to attend meetings of the Parish Council which start at 7.15pm in the Village Hall, Main Street, Newtown Linford, LE6 0AE. The dates of the next three meetings are advertised on our website: www.newtownlinford.org.uk

Chairman's Conclusion

During the past 12 months, Newtown Linford Parish Council have strived to improve facilities for residents and associates of the Village.

I'm pleased to report, the traffic management restrictions implemented around the Parish in early 2021, have had a hugely positive impact on village life, with far fewer reports of obstructively and dangerously parked vehicles, making our roads safer. We will continue to monitor the impact of the double yellow line restrictions and also the effects on vehicle speeds.

Newtown Linford Parish Council have also been proud to support the newly formed Newtown Linford Biodiversity group, who have been busy undertaking important work in protecting and increasing biodiversity in our Parish. I wish to thank Claire Costello and members of the group for their enthusiasm and commitment to this work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all other village organisations and residents in making Newtown Linford a great place to live and work. Over the course of the pandemic, we have seen our community come together to become a stronger network of support and in particular, for more vulnerable members of our Parish.

Thank you to our Parish Clerk, Hannah Shaw and my fellow Councillors, for their support also and for their time and efforts in making Newtown Linford a more pleasant (and safer) place to be. All Parish Councillors are unpaid volunteers and I am grateful for their work.

Dr. Sue Pritchard
Chairman