



Purpose of the report

To give details of the achievements of the Parish Council over the last 18 months and to set out the Council's priorities for 2021/2022. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, an Annual Report was not produced and therefore, this Annual Report will cover 18 months since September 2019 and the appointment of our new Clerk, Mrs Hannah Shaw.

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 Sue Greasley (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Stuart Eyre
Councillor Robert Haylock
Councillor Vicki Lightfoot
Councillor Tara Pickles
Councillor Tim Porte

Your Parish Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer and Registrar of Burials

Mrs Hannah Shaw
248 Markfield Road,
Groby,
Leicester.
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Telephone: 01530 249945

COVID-19 pandemic

As we marked the one year anniversary since the Government first imposed a national coronavirus lockdown on National Day of Reflection, 23rd March 2021, we are reflective of how our community have pulled together during this time of crisis.

Following an appeal for volunteers in March 2020, a reassuring number of Newtown Linford residents, came forward to offer help and support to anyone affected by the pandemic and in isolation. It was at this time, the Newtown Linford Community Action Response (CAR) was born.

Volunteers continue to offer assistance to those in need by picking up shopping, collecting prescriptions, posting mail or for a friendly phone call.

Community spirit has shone throughout, despite the difficulties many have faced in their own lives over the past year and we are grateful to those who so kindly give their time to helping others through simple acts of kindness. We are proud to be part of such a caring and resilient community.

Newtown Linford Parish Council have continued business through virtual meetings enabled by The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime

Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. These regulations come to an end on 7th May 2021, at which time, Parish Council meetings must return to face-to-face.

Whilst restrictions continue to be eased through the Government Roadmap, the Parish Council may need to refer to the Scheme of Delegation which permits the Clerk to make emergency decisions on behalf of the Parish Council outside of a formal meeting, until such time it is safe for face-to-face meetings to resume, hopefully from the estimated date of 21st June 2021.

Newtown Linford Parish Council continue to support and serve the parishioners of Newtown Linford throughout the Covid-19 crisis. Our heartfelt condolences go out to all those who have lost loved ones to Covid-19.

Overview

Over the past twelve months, the Parish Council and its staff continue 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.

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

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 2020 Advent Windows initiative which was well supported by residents across the Parish. Our thanks go to resident, Ruth Brutnall who instigated and organised the idea.

Chairman, Sue Pritchard, attends to the Village troughs regularly throughout the year and the Parish Council fund hanging baskets displayed at three locations on Bradgate Road and on Groby Lane and a flower tower at the Village Hall. The Chairman has also planted spring bulbs at the Cemetery on Groby Lane.

Main Achievements between September 2019 and March 2021

There have been a number of notable events and achievements over the last 18 months:

Bob Bown

- Following an inspection in July 2020, whereby the football fencing and goals at the Bob Bown Memorial Field were condemned due to safety concerns, the Parish Council were forced to remove them from use and in December 2020, new bespoke fencing and goals were installed.

- 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 a basket swing. The installation and associated works will commence in June 2021.

Cemetery & Churchyard

- We are proud to have supported volunteers at All Saints' Churchyard who have established a wildflower area and congratulate them on their recently awarded Eco Bronze Award. The Parish Council have funded a plaque in celebration of this achievement which will be installed in the coming weeks.
- A total of 9 new memorial trees have been planted at the Cemetery in memory of loved ones, kindly donated by the families.
- In March 2020, a total of 120 new trees awarded to us by The Woodland Trust, were planted around the Parish; 30 of these saplings having been planted in the extended area of the Cemetery on Groby Lane and the other 90 were distributed amongst residents and farmers of the Parish for planting on private land.

Highways & Road Safety

- Following repeated incidents of collisions with street furniture on Main Street, the Parish Council pushed forward the need for further bollards to highlight the build out of the chicane outside the School. Since the installation of two additional bollards and reflective material fitted to existing bollards in early 2020, there have been no further reported incidents.
- Following reports of vehicles speeding into and out of the Village on Main Street between the junctions with Markfield Lane and Ulverscroft Lane, the Parish Council worked in partnership with the Road Safety Unit at Leicestershire Police and a covert speed survey was carried out from 26th September to 6th October 2020.
During this time, 18% of vehicles were found to be exceeding the National Police Chief Council enforcement threshold of 10% +2mph, representing poor compliance with the limit. As such, the Police Traffic Management Department of Leicestershire Police will now coordinate enforcement operations utilising Officers from the Local beat team and / or the Safer Roads Team.
- Since the covert speed survey took place, the Parish Council have launched a 'Bin Sticker Initiative' supported by Leicestershire Police and Leicestershire County Council in November 2020, to remind motorists to stick to the speed limit. Bin stickers have been issued to a number of households on Bradgate Road, Main Street, Markfield Lane and Roecliffe Road.
- The Parish Council have been integral in driving forward the need for waiting restrictions around the Parish following an increase in visitors to the village during the pandemic. We hope the recently approved proposals following a consultation in November 2020, will address both parking problems within the village and the dangerous and inconsiderate parking occurring on roads surrounding the three Bradgate Park entrances. The new restrictions came into force on 02/04/21 and lining work continues. We are proud to have worked in partnership with LCC, Borough and County Councillors and Leicestershire Police.

Organisations

- The Parish Council were proud to support Newtown Linford Cricket Club by awarding them a £500 grant in May 2020. The funds will support the club with their running costs during the forced pandemic closure.
- Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Parish Council have used their social media platform to issue service updates of Village businesses and introduced a 'Monday Marketing' post in November 2020 which gives every local business and organisation represented on the group, a weekly opportunity to advertise their services, menus, opening hours and updates.
- Following the Governments forced closure of All Saints' Church, the Parish Council have supported the Church and attendants by sharing the weekly virtual service and other events through our Facebook page.

Parish Council Business

- An approximate total of 47 planning applications have been considered during Parish Council meetings and comments submitted through Charnwood Borough Council's Planning Portal.
- A Duty of Care Tree Inspection was carried out in March 2021 at the three Parish Council maintained sites and moderate concerns have been highlighted. The Parish Council will now work in addressing the issues raised.
- An Annual Governance review has been carried out in 2021 and revised Parish Council policies and procedures will be adopted at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May.
- The Parish Council's Facebook group has more than doubled in size to 345 members as at 08/04/21. Through this, more residents from harder to reach areas of the Parish are becoming involved in village activity.
- Engagement with residents continues through regular updates on our website, social media and through village magazine articles and our email distribution list. Regular 'Cover Photo' competitions are held on our Facebook page and every 6 months, a new winning photograph takes pride of place. In 2019, and in collaboration with Newtown Linford Primary School, all pupils voted for their favourite entry on Election Day. An Easter colouring competition was also held in 2020 for the children of the Parish, primary school and pre-school.
- On Friday 31st January 2020, Chairman, Sue Pritchard, attended the Armed Forces Covenant Signing at Charnwood Borough Council offices. Following this, Newtown Linford Parish Council received a bronze award from the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

Village

- Flood defences were issued to a number of properties at risk of flooding during three episodes of bad weather in October 2019, February 2020 and June 2020. Each time, different properties were affected by either flash floods due to heavy rain or surface water runoff. Further flood defences are available at the Village Hall in the event of further flooding emergencies.
- Having received a number of requests from residents, the Parish Council purchased a small supply of litter picking equipment for residents to borrow. Requests to use the equipment are regular and all pickers and bag hoops are currently out on loan. A further request to the LCC Community Litter

Picking Fund has been submitted for additional equipment and certificates are issued to our younger residents when they have been out litter picking with family.

- The Parish Council have supported the newly established Newtown Linford Biodiversity Volunteer Group. The Clerk attends regularly meetings in an advisory capacity and the group are currently working on mapping the Parish to assist the Parish Council in applying for a SHIRE Environment Grant in late 2021 for the installation of bat, bird and owl boxes and hedgehog hotels at the three Parish Council maintained sites.
- In addition to the above, the Parish Council are in support of further wildflower verges. Having successfully consulted with a number of Bradgate Road residents and working in partnership with LCC and Bradgate Park Trust, two new wildflower areas have been established on Bradgate Road as part of the Blue Hearts Campaign. These areas are in addition to the established site on Markfield Lane and work continues in identifying more suitable sites. 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 rare native miniature daffodils are currently in bloom.
- Two new dog waste bins have been installed on Ulverscroft Lane and Main Street where residents have experienced problems with dog fouling.
- A new grit bin has been installed at the Village Hall on Main Street for use by the Snow Wardens and residents in clearing key walkways to the School and Village Hall in prolonged periods of ice and snow.
- Three Volunteer Flood Wardens and two volunteer Snow Wardens have been appointed for the Parish in liaison with Leicestershire County Council.
- The Parish Council bus shelters were repainted in 2020 by volunteers. Our thanks go to residents, Scott Raynor and David Rigg for their help.
- Three Parish Council owned streetlights have been converted to LED lanterns to help reduce carbon footprint.

Key Priorities for 2021/2022

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 will be installed in June 2021.

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.

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 monitor the impacts and address any issues arising, including the possibility of bollard installation in areas where pavement driving continues.
- 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 in the 2021/2022 period, we will consider flashing speed limit signs attached to street lighting columns where legislation allows.

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.

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.
- 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

- In liaison with the Newtown Linford Biodiversity group, the Parish Council will submit an application for a SHIRE Environment Grant up to £3000, for the installation of bat, bird and owl boxes and hedgehog hotels at the three Parish Council maintained sites.
- 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 2021/2022 financial period has been set to £54,075 which is an increase of 5% on the previous year. For Band D properties, this equates to a £6.71 rise or 13p a week.

The precept set and Council tax Base rates for the current and previous two 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

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 proposed 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 estimated annual rent of £2000. We currently 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 tree survey of all three Parish Council maintained sites took place in March 2021 and any associated tree works highlighted will need addressing.
- 5) Street lighting maintenance outside of our agreement with LCC, has not previously been budgeted for. The Parish Council owns 55 street lights which may require work following structural testing etc. In the past year, two street lighting columns have been subject to non-stop road traffic collisions and one has failed its structural testing.
- 6) New fencing and goals were installed at Bob Bown Memorial Field in December 2020. The previous fencing was condemned at a park inspection during Summer 2020.
- 7) A Village Hall rent review is due in 2021 and it is expected the rent will be increased.

The following is a summary of unaudited income and expenditure for the 2020/2021 financial period and includes the sum of £51,500 raised as part of the precept (Council Tax):

Area	Expenditure	Income
Administration including staff costs	£18,585.33	£51,500.00
Bob Bown Memorial Field	£8,472.94	-
Cemetery	£8,209.81	£4,470.00
All Saints' Closed Churchyard	£3,385.00	-
Grants Awarded	£500.00	£10,000.00
Street Lighting	£5,931.02	-
Village Hall Rent & Maintenance	£1,860.00	-
Village Hanging Baskets & Flower Tower	£832.80	-
Village Magazine Donation 2020 & 2021	£1,300.00	-
Village Maintenance	£502.77	-

PWLB Loan Repayments	£4,936.12	-
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Newtown Linford Parish Council Staff

Newtown Linford Parish Council employ one member of staff. Following the retirement of the Parish Clerk in September 2019, Mrs Hannah Shaw was appointed to the role at 12 hours per week. This increased to 17 hours per week in April 2020 when the role of Responsible Financial Officer was added and from 1st April 2021, took on the role of Registrar of Burials and her contractual hours have now increased to 20 hours per week.

Our seasonal grounds maintenance team are external contractors 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 and are currently held virtually by Zoom or usually in the small hall of the Village Hall, Main Street, Newtown Linford, LE6 0AE. The dates of the next two meetings are advertised on our website:

www.newtownlinford.org.uk

Chairman's Conclusion

This has indeed been an eventful time and much has been achieved over the past 2 years since our last Annual Meeting of the Parish. I would like to say thank you to Pam McMorran who has now retired from her remaining responsibilities having handed over a well-run Parish Office to Hannah in a timely and efficient manner. We will be acknowledging Pam's retirement when village Coffee and Cake can resume- hopefully at the end of June.

Hannah has rapidly assimilated her new roles and has shown great enthusiasm and talent in supporting the Parish Council through these difficult times. In addition to normal clerking duties she has dealt with innumerable enquiries re Parish business, coordinated our Volunteer response and a huge amount of her time has been spent dealing with, collating and reporting all the difficulties that the vastly increased number of visitors to Bradgate Park has brought to both Police and Local Authorities.

I would also like to thank my fellow Councillors, for their support and and their time and efforts to making Newtown Linford more pleasant (and safer) place to live. All Parish Councillors are unpaid volunteers and I am grateful for their work.

We look forward to brighter times ahead following the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Dr. Sue Pritchard
Chairman