



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 2023/2024.

Newtown Linford Parish Council is made up of 7 members, 3 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 Harvey Singh in May 2023.

Your Parish Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer and Registrar of Burials

Mrs Hannah Shaw
248 Markfield Road,
Groby,
Leicester.
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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.

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
- 57 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 has continued to organise the event since. In 2022, we held our very first Christmas Advent Event at the Village Hall in partnership with Newtown Linford Primary School. The evening was supported by Newtown Linford Choral Society who sang carols around the Village Christmas Tree. We plan to run the event again in 2023 on the first Thursday of December.

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 2024.

Main Achievements between April 2022 and March 2023

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

Bob Bown

- Following a successful SHIRE Environment Grant application to LCC, Newtown Linford Parish Council in association with Newtown Linford Biodiversity, installed bird boxes, hedgehog and insect hotels at Parish Council maintained sites around the Parish including the Bob Bown Memorial Field. The bird boxes have been particularly successful during nesting season. In between times, NLB arranged the cleaning of the bird boxes and have reinstalled them for the 2023 nesting season.
- 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.
- A further consultation was held with residents and park users regarding possible new equipment for the play park. Councillors voted unanimously in favour of replacing the old wet pour surface which had suffered shrinkage, with a new 'carpet' style surface. New play equipment was also ordered including a climbing wall, see-saw and streetboard springie. Following a delay, works commenced in April 2023 and are now complete. This does leave a gap in play facilities in the short-term, however, we hope to continue with regeneration of the park over the forthcoming years and sooner if further grant funding can be secured.
- New signage was purchased and installed at the Bob Bown Memorial Field in response to non-permitted apparatus, such as rope swings, being installed from trees within the woodland.

Cemetery & Churchyard

- Following a review of the Grounds Maintenance Contract for all three Parish Council maintained sites in December 2021, we are very pleased with the progress of our contractor, Michael Liggins of Firetree and the 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.
- A multi-stemmed self-set yew bush has been removed at All Saints' Churchyard to protect edging stones around nearby graves. This has made way for a new bench which will be installed in 2023/2024 in memory of Janet Neaverson.
- A review of our Cemetery Fees has been carried out to bring Newtown Linford Cemetery in line with other nearby authorities and to cover increasing maintenance costs.
- The Parish Council requested inclusion for the three Parish Council maintained sites, within the Charnwood Public Spaces Order in relation to keeping dogs on leads and out of park areas.
- The Parish Council opened a book of condolence at All Saints' Church following the passing of her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. The Church remained open over the period of mourning and the book is now kept in the Village Archives.
- Following the death of her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, a local reading of the proclamation was delivered at All Saints' Churchyard by Vice-Chairman, Councillor Tim Porte, as the Chairman was out of the country. Around 30 members of the public attended and flowers were laid.
- Badger and mole deterrents have been installed at the Cemetery, Churchyard and the Bob Bown Memorial Field following disturbances to the ground

Highways & Road Safety

- The Parish Council and Clerk listened and supported residents in the vicinity of the speed hump by Tyburn footpath on Main Street. Following reports made to LCC Highways regarding the disruption caused to residents by traffic hitting the speed hump, re-patching works were ordered and residents have since reported the situation being much improved.
- Following on from a request by a resident of Main Street, Councillors voted in favour of painting out the back of a streetlight on Main Street at a cost of £100, which was shining into the resident's property and causing a nuisance.
- Councillors agreed to funding the fell of a tree stump following reports from residents that the height of the stump allowed people to gain access to their properties off the access track to the Bob Bown Memorial Field.

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 were 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 are also funding a fortnightly grass cut of mown pathways within the Markfield Lane wildflower verge, to allow pedestrians to explore the natural flora and fauna.

- 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. The 5 yearly rent review with APB, the agents working on behalf of the Village Hall owner, resulted in large rent increase to £3000 per annum (reduced from £4,550 after negotiation) and was back dated to September 2021. The Parish Council will continue to support the Village Hall Committee to ensure this important village asset remains viable and increased the Clerk's hours to take on the role of Booking Secretary and to assist with advertising.
- 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 57 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 but allowed on appeal.
- Approximately 150 residents attended Parish Council meetings over the course of the year for a variety of reasons, including a planning application for the demolition of 287 Markfield Lane and the development of up to 150 dwellings, together with open space and drainage infrastructure. The Parish Council advised residents on planning procedures and objected to this application. This application is ongoing and currently with CBC.
- The Vice-Chairman and Clerk attended Section 106 training in 2022 and the Parish Council have since expressed their wishes to be included in two separate Section 106 agreements should planning permission be granted.
- An Annual Governance review has been carried out again in 2023 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 Statement of Internal Control and a Planning Policy which outlines how the Parish Council deal with all planning applications within the Parish.
- The Parish Council's Facebook group has increased to 452 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 applied and were successful in registering the Village Hall as an Asset of Community Value with Charnwood Borough Council. 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 by funding a fortnightly grass cut of mown pathways within the Markfield Lane wildflower verge, to allow pedestrians to explore the natural flora and fauna; financial support for Village Hall hire costs for the annual NLB open evening and the purchase of equipment for the upkeep of the wildflower verges at a cost of £241.89. Newtown Linford Biodiversity have also been given space on the Parish Council website.
- A new bin was purchased for the cemetery at a cost of £420.00

Key Priorities for 2023/2024

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 and April 2023.

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 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 2023/2024 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!
- NLPC have resolved to, if possible, apply for Adverse Possession of a small piece of land which abuts the River Lin on the corner of Markfield Lane, where it meets with Main Street. Newtown Linford Biodiversity have expressed an interest in the management of this land.

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 was agreed to assist the Village Hall Committee with bookings and marketing from 01/06/22, following an increase in gas and electric charges which quadrupled in 2022. 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.
- 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 and may consider additional LED conversions now the payback time is under 3 years due to the increased cost of electricity.
- The Parish Council are supporting a Village Coronation event in May 2023 to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III and agreed a grant of up to £500.

Financial Information

In order to maintain Parish Council reserves between 3 and 12 month running costs, the precept for the 2023/2024 financial period has been set to £59,618.00 which is an increase of 4.6% on the previous year. Band D properties, this equates to a £4.85 rise or 9.3p a week.

The precept set and Council tax Base rates for the current and previous four 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
2023/24 Base number of properties 537.1 divided into precept of £59,618 = £111.00

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 previously 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 will result in legal fees payable by the Parish Council.
- 4) Three new pieces of play equipment have been purchased for the Bob Bown Memorial Field, in addition to new carpet style surfacing to replace the aged wet pour which had suffered shrinkage. In total over the last two years, Newtown Linford Parish Council has invested approximately £33,000 in new surfacing, play equipment, fencing and football goals. A £10,000 grant from the National Lottery helped to achieve some of this work in 2021.
- 5) Street lighting maintenance outside of our agreement with LCC has been budgeted at £1,500.00. The Parish Council owns 57 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 was quoted at £4,470 but due to the rise in electricity prices, the final bill totalled £5,652.05.
- 6) A Village Hall rent review was agreed in 2022 and the rent increased by £1250 per annum, an increase of 71.5%. Initially, the agent requested a 160% increase at £4,550. As Custodian Trustee of the Village Hall, the Parish Council now pays £3000 rent per annum.

The following is a summary of unaudited income and expenditure for the 2022/2023 financial period and includes the sum of £56,779 raised as part of the precept (Council Tax):

Area	Expenditure	Income
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Administration including staff costs	£19256.33	Precept £56,779
Bob Bown Memorial Field	£4,432.02 (payment pending of £18,500)	-
Cemetery	£5151.20	£3,594.00
All Saints' Closed Churchyard	£4812.02	-
Street Lighting	£5,772.05	-
Village Hall Rent & Maintenance	£3,967.50	-
Village Magazine Donation 2022	£650.00	-
Village Maintenance	£860.91	-
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 21 hours per week.

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 the facilities and environs for residents and associates of the Village. We are facing increasing pressure on the open spaces within and adjacent to the village from proposed housing developments and commercial infrastructure and planning issues are concerning both the Council and our residents. I should like to thank our Borough Councillor David Snartt and our County Councillor Deborah Taylor for their advice and support regarding these matters.

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. The coronation event attracted over 400 residents, friends and families and my thanks go to the organisers, led by Dick Howard, and also to Malcom Brewin for the preparation and use of his fields.

Thank you to our Parish Clerk, Hannah Shaw who is always friendly, helpful and knowledgeable and I know our residents and my fellow councillors are also grateful for all you do.

Thank you also to my fellow councillors, past and present, for their support and also for their time and efforts on behalf of our residents. All Parish Councillors are unpaid volunteers and I am very grateful for their work.

Dr. Sue Pritchard
Chairman

