

District Council Report for Newent Town Council

Annual Parish Meeting 2024

from Cllrs Gill Moseley & Julie Hudson

Elections and Leadership – In May last year, a new Forest of Dean District Council was elected. The largest party is now The Green Party with 15 members of a council of 38. With no overall majority, the support of other Groups is needed to approve strategy and make decisions. The Cabinet is made up entirely of members of The Green Party.

Cllr Mark Topping was elected Leader last year, but has recently stood down from the position which has been taken by Cllr Adrian Birch, also of The Green Party

The Head of Paid Staff also retired last year and was replaced, after an interim appointment, with a new, retitled CEO in the person of Nigel Brinn. His style is ‘hands on’ and he frequently attends meetings at all levels, and has started to convene pre-Full Council meetings of Group Leaders, which Cllr Moseley attends as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group. Not all Group Leaders attend these meetings but those who do, feel it important to work together as far as possible in the interests of the residents of the FoDDC.

Publica – The FoDDC is currently run as part of a wholly owned consortium of four local councils. Publica was set up to achieve cost savings but it has been agreed by the member councils that the principle is no longer working at all levels. Therefore the organisation is being wound-up and each council will become sovereign once more. Cllr Moseley is a member of the working group that is scutinising the management of the break-up. Some areas of co-operation will be retained that are proving beneficial, such as IT provision.

Local Plan – Work continues apace to formulate the next draft of the Local Plan. The public consultation is expected in the week beginning July 8th with one event taking place in Newent, as it is one of the three areas of focus for major housing development within the agreed strategy of dispersed development. Cllr Moseley is a regular attendee of the Portfolio Support Group which is developing the draft headed by officers and the Cabinet Portfolio holder for the Local Plan. Cllr Julie Hudson and Cllr Gill Moseley recently had a meeting with the officers and Cabinet member to discuss the way in which the Newent Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) would have an input into the FoDDC plan, which it must sit alongside once both are completed. Employment is a major issue for Newent and provision and promotion both need to be addressed both in the plan and as part of the overall FoDDC strategy.

Section 106 – it was discovered that interest was not added when S106 funds were held by FoDDC and passed over to parish and town councils for schemes agreed to be funded through developer contributions. This interest can be a substantial sum when the money is held for a period of time, which is often the case, and following a motion at Full Council in December, proposed by Cllr Gill Moseley, that has changed for moneys held for over a year..

General – Under the Cabinet system of governance, there exist two main and two smaller standing committees, respectively, Development Management and Strategic Overview & Scrutiny, and Audit and Licensing. Membership is proportionate to the political/group representation on the whole council and Cllr Moseley is a member of DMC, and was elected Vice Chair last May. Both Cllrs Hudson and Moseley sit on the Licensing Committee, with a third member of the Liberal Democrat Group taking a place on the SOSC.

Please feel free to ask for further information at:

gill.moseley@fdean.gov.uk 01531 820826

Julie.hudson@fdean.gov.uk 07515 284332