

**Annual Town Meeting  
Held at Lydney Town Hall, Lydney  
Monday 7 April 2014 at 7.00 pm**

**Present:** Lydney Town Council  
B Berryman (Mayor), J Bevan, D Biddle, R Bonser, C Harris, C Matthews, B Pearman, A Preest, S Rudge, C Vaughan

Mrs J Smailes - Chief Executive Officer  
Miss C Wheeler - Executive Officer  
Miss K Hammond – Administrative Assistant  
Mr R Lewis – Independent Internal Auditor, Wildin & Co

Gloucestershire Police  
Superintendent PC P Hopkins

35 Members of the Public

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Councillor Berryman welcomed all present to the meeting and explained that no practice fire evacuations were scheduled during the event. Attendees were then informed of the location of the fire exits and were reminded that questions from the electorate would be taken later in the meeting.

All attendees were provided with a bound version of Lydney Town Council's Annual Report 2013/14.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs Greenwood, Hobman, Osborne and Thomas and District Cllrs Davis and Glastonbury

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting dated 15 April 2013 were confirmed and approved as a true record and duly signed. **Proposed by Cllr Biddle, seconded by Cllr Harris.** Vote carried.

3. **MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2013/14** – Cllr B Berryman

Cllr Berryman read out his report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/2014.

4. **ANNUAL POLICE REPORT**

PC Hopkins advised that the crime numbers had reduced when compared to 2013; that an operation to tackle speeding in the Parish would shortly be undertaken by Police and that with regard to the closure of the Police Station, a Police Information Point (PIP) would be operated from the Fire Station, however, no timeframe for the closure of the Police Station had yet been given.

**Q** – I agree that its time something was done to address speeding in the Parish.

**A** – Whilst Officers did undertake an operation a fortnight ago, no vehicles were found to be speeding. However, the imminent operation would be of a different type.

**Q** – We hardly see a Police Officer in Lydney.

**A** – I spend 2-3 hours per day walking the streets in the Town.

Q – Will you also be targeting drivers who use their mobile phones whilst driving?

A – Yes. We will also be targeting those drivers who do not wear their seatbelts.

Q – Speeding in the Town also occurs at night.

A – I will ensure that all comments are relayed to the new Sargent, Richard Pitman.

Members of the public also highlighted that the number of cars speeding in Bream Road was on the increase and welcomed the presence of a Police Officer at the meeting.

5. **LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Planning and Highway Committee** – Cllr J Bevan

Cllr Bevan read out his report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/14.

**Amenities Committee** – Cllr R Bonser (on behalf of Cllr B Thomas)

Cllr Thomas read out the Committee's report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/2014.

**Burial Committee** – Cllr C Harris

Cllr Harris read out her report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/2014.

**Finance and Scrutiny Committee** – Cllr B Pearman

Cllr Pearman read out his report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/2014.

**CEOs Financial Report** – Mrs J Smailes

The CEO summarised her report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/14

6. **COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT** – County Cllr Preest

County Cllr Preest read out his report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/14.

7. **FOREST OF DEAN DISTRICT COUNCIL'S REPORT** – District Cllr J Bevan (on behalf of Mr P Hibberd)

District Cllr Bevan read out Mr Hibberd's report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/14.

8. **HEAD GROUNDSMAN'S REPORT** – Mr J Young

Mr Young read out his report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/14.

9. **CHARITABLE TRUST REPORTS**

**Bathurst Park and Recreation Trust** – Trustee C Matthews

Trustee Matthews read out her report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/14.

**Lydney Recreation Trust** – Trustee Biddle

Trustee Biddle read out his report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/14.

10. **COMMUNITY REPORTS**

**Lydney Tennis Club** – Mr Martin Godwin, Chairman

Mr Godwin read out the Club's report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/2014, however, he highlighted that a section had been removed from the report pertaining to the decommissioning of the Trust's footbridge which he had originally supplied.

Mr Godwin was advised of the Council's editorial rights and the necessity to comply with health and safety legislation/Duty of Care.

**Lydney Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group** – Cllr Brian Pearman, Chairman  
Referencing the Group's report contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/14, Cllr Pearman advised that the Group's Consultation Statement amounted to 126 pages and the Examiner's Version of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) had been formulated from consultation exercises. Thanks were expressed to all those who had participated in the consultation exercises and Cllr Pearman stressed that the NDP was an enabling document which could be used in the future to resolve issues.

Cllr Pearman advised that he had personally hand delivered a copy of the Examiner's Version of the NDP to Forest of Dean District Council on 4 April 2014 and then outlined the steps which would then need to be taken by said Authority prior to holding a Referendum on the document.

All present were advised that further information on the NDP could be obtained via the Group's website ([www.lydneyndp.org.uk](http://www.lydneyndp.org.uk)) and that upon adoption the NDP became a Statutory Planning Document which could be used to plan/shape the Town. Cllr Pearman provided details of the Group's next meeting, which was available for all interested parties to attend.

**Lydney Town Hall Trust Management Committee** – Mr Colin Knight, Chairman  
Mr Knight read out the Committee's report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/2014.

**Lydney Community Centre** – Ms P Stokes (on behalf of Mr D Biddle, Chairman)  
Ms Stokes read out the Centre's report, as contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/14.

**Lydney War Memorial Trust** – Mr F Bennett, Chair  
Mr Bennett advised that due to the departure of a tenant the Trust had secured new tenants for one of its properties who had undertaken an overall of the garden. The Trust had applied for funding to provide a walk-in bath at a cost of £6,000, however, as funding had not been secured the Trust had elected to provide the tenant with a shower facility instead.

Mr Bennett advised that the Trust's properties had been rewired; that the flashing on one of the chimneys had required replacement; that on Christmas Eve the aerial for one of the properties had failed which required the installation of a more powerful system in the loft space.

**Friends of Lydney Hospital** – Mr A Midgeley, Chairman  
Mr Midgeley advised that the Friends of Lydney Hospital (FOLH) were actively involved in Gloucestershire NHS Trust Care in the Community events. From the meetings which had been attended it was felt that health and social care arrangements in the Forest would be the subject of scrutiny and debate. Mr Midgeley felt that all Councillors would need to play an active part in networking with decision makers.

Mr Midgeley advised that FOLH engaged in monthly communication sessions which appeared to be working well and he reported that fundraising efforts continued. All present were informed that the annual Hospital Fete continued to act as a major fundraising event for the Hospital and also acted as a vital link to draw the Hospital and the community together. Mr Midgeley advised that a major project undertaken by FOLH was the refurbishment of the staff room which had been really appreciated by the hospital's staff and that FOLH produced a six-monthly newsletter which was distributed throughout the Town.



**Royal British Legion – Lydney Branch** – Mr M Rudge, RBL Branch Chairman and Mr F Bennett

Mr Rudge clarified that the Club, not the Branch, had gone into administration, however, the Club's auditors had allowed it to continue to trade at the present time. It was noted that the building had been left in Trust to the Branch and would continue to exist as long as the Branch remained.

Mr Rudge advised that the Branch had taken part in the Armed Forces Event together with Dean Forest Railway and he was pleased to report that attendance at the Remembrance Service had been the largest ever. Mr Rudge explained that whilst the Remembrance Service was a civic event for the Town, it was organised on the Council's behalf by the Legion and he highlighted the positive relationship which existed between the two organisations.

Attention was drawn to the fact that 2014 was the anniversary of the Great War and that the Legion had submitted an outline to the Council as to how the event could be commemorated.

Thanks were expressed to Mr S Rudge, Poppy Appeal Organiser and it was noted that since Mr S Rudge had assumed the role he had raised in excess of £100,000 for the Appeal. Mr Rudge advised that he was a member of the Gloucester County Committee and that the Lydney Branch possessed one of the most active Welfare Committees.

Mr Bennett advised that the Branch came under the South West Midlands and that an office had been set up in Bristol in May. It was noted that holidays/breaks were made available to current and past serving members of the armed forces and those eligible were encouraged to telephone the Legion's Contact Centre in Cardiff for further information. Mr Bennett reported that the Welfare Committee had received a number of legacies and he highlighted that any money gained would be "ring fenced" for Lydney and Aylburton residents only. Attendees were encouraged to contact the Legion if their ancestors had served in WWI or if they possessed any artefacts from the period.

Mr Rudge advised that the Branch now operated a "Pop In Centre" which had been received with great success. It was noted that that the Centre had dealt with 16 cases during the four weeks it had been open.

**Lydney Dial-a-Ride** – Mrs L Currie, Manager

Mrs Currie advised that the organisation was focused on a core vision to prevent social and rural exclusion. Mrs Currie advised that over the last 12 months the organisation had taken on a schools contract for pupils with special education needs.

Attendees noted that Lydney Dial-a-Ride now leased the Bus Station from Gloucestershire County Council which housed the buses, offices and shop. Mrs Currie advised that Dial-a-Ride were now able to accept concessionary bus passes and funding had been obtained to cover the cost of engaging a Forest Transport Co-ordinator.

**Neds Top Residents Action Group** – Mr R Deeks

Referencing his report which was contained in the Council's Annual Report for 2013/14, Mr Deeks highlighted that increased traffic had been noticed on the local roads due to the work which was being conducted on the A48; that development on greenfield sites was a big cause for concern for the Group and highlighted that one proposed development equated to the size of 15 football pitches; suggested that the issue surrounding the proposed development at Allaston was related to sustainability; advised that the Group had engaged with the Neighbourhood

Development Plan and offered congratulations to Cllr Pearman on the work undertaken so far.

Mr Deeks called for work to take place on the infrastructure in the Town in order to ensure that any development was sustainable and he also highlighted the importance of providing sustainable transport.

**Lydney Yacht Club** – Ms K Kilby, Vice Commodore

Ms Kilby advised that the Club had been moving forward over the last few years to increase its membership and gain younger members. Attendees were informed that the Environment Agency planned to sell the Harbour, nevertheless the Club were determined to get involved with the development of the Harbour and had organised more training courses for members of the public and young people.

Ms Kilby reported the Club would participate in the Lydney Festival again; that on 28/29 June it intended to fill the Harbour with boats and anticipated attendance figures of 2,000 over the entire weekend.

**Lakeside Residents** – Mr G Blake (on behalf of the residents)

Mr Blake provided a report on the events leading up to the flooding which occurred on Christmas Eve 2013. The main points of Mr Blake's report are shown below:

- February 2013 – timber which had interfered with over-head electrical cables on land at the rear of 115 Lakeside Avenue was felled.
- Whilst residents had contacted Forest of Dean District Council and Lydney Town Council to request the removal of said timber no action was taken.
- Christmas Eve 2013 – during a storm a quantity of the timber entered the watercourse subsequently blocking the trash screen at the rear of 115 Lakeside Avenue, which caused flooding to occur in numerous properties in Lakeside Avenue.
- It was noted that a number of elderly and frail residents had to be evacuated from their properties and the owner of 115 Lakeside Avenue performed heroics on the night to unblock the trash screen in the dark which prevented the problem from becoming much worse.
- Since the flooding, investigations are on-going to ascertain if there are insurance implications for the properties which had flooded (it was known that due to a previous flood no insurance could be obtained for 115 Lakeside Avenue), in addition legal investigations into the ownership of the trash screen.
- Appreciation was voiced for the work Lydney Town Council Members and staff had undertaken to unblock the watercourse and its continued assistance, advice and shared concern.
- It was noted that a multi-agency meeting has taken place with Lakeside residents, during which it was stated that the trash screen was 90% blocked; that Forest of Dean District Council were performing checks on the watercourse to remove any rubbish, especially when adverse weather was forecast; manhole covers surrounding 115 Lakeside Avenue have been replaced with gully tops which it was hoped would assist with any future flooding occurrences.
- Regretfully a large quantity of the original timber/rubbish/detritus still remained in situ despite Forest of Dean District Council being asked to remove the material fourteen months ago.
- Concern was expressed that Forest of Dean District Council had stated that it had no intention of repairing or replacing its broken fences which currently allowed easy access onto the site.

In view of the above Mr Blake called on Lydney Town Council to maintain pressure on Forest of Dean District Council to ensure that the aforementioned material was removed from site and to continue to work together to establish land ownership in the area.

11. **QUESTION/ANSWER PERIOD**

Three questions were received in advance of the meeting which are summarised below:

i) **Question submitted by Mrs M Walker**

*I would like to bring up the “problem” of A Boards on the pavements in the Town Centre. Whist I have raised the issue previously with County Cllr Preest, I have yet to receive a response.*

County Cllr Preest advised that he had met with Mr B Watkins, Gloucestershire County Council to discuss the matter and it was not perceived to be an issue at present. It was stressed that sufficient width was provided for mobility scooters/double buggies, however, County Cllr Preest called for members of the public to inform him if specific issues were experienced.

Responding to a further comment made by Mrs Walker, County Cllr Preest requested that Mrs Walker provide details of specific locations where problems were experienced with A Boards in the Town. Once the information had been received County Cllr Preest gave a commitment to arrange for Mr Watkins to re-assess the specified areas.

ii) **Question submitted by Mrs M Walker**

*How can the Town Council justify increasing our Council Tax again this year – bringing the increase in 5 years to 57.88% compared to the increases by Gloucestershire County Council of 2.3%; Gloucestershire Police of 7.08% and Forest of Dean District Council of 2.3%?*

Cllr Pearman, Chairman, Finance and Scrutiny Committee advised that upon reviewing the Town Council’s Precept over a 5 year period it was not possible to arrive at the same figure as quoted by Mrs Walker. Responding to a further question raised by Mrs Walker, it was highlighted that a number of issues affected individual’s Council tax bills (e.g. the tax base). Attention was drawn to the spreadsheet which detailed the audited figures for the last 5 years and the decrease in the Precept, when compared to the previous year, was highlighted. However, all present were informed that the way in which the Local Council Support Tax was calculated by Forest of Dean District Council had now changed which affected the Council’s budget.

Other comments were made by attendees, as it had been noted that whilst Forest of Dean District Council had not increased their Precept, they had introduced charges for other services (e.g. green waste bins, car parking, etc). Whilst some attendees felt that, following the decision to substantially increase the Council’s Precept approximately three years ago, residents should by now receive a reduction in their Precept Demand, the CEO explained that the Council’s Precept was now at the required level in order to provide such services as deemed necessary by the Town Council. It was emphasised that the Town Council was responsible for two Charitable Trusts; the CEO encouraged Members of the Public to put forward suggestions to the Council as to how the Council’s Precept may be reduced whilst still providing the facilities (including the Charitable Trusts, St Mary’s Closed Churchyard and Lydney Cemetery) desired by residents as any such suggestions would be carefully analysed and applied if appropriate . The CEO also

explained that the Council's Earmarked and Free Reserves were almost at the required level and explained the advice which had been received from the National Association of Local Council's that Parish/Town Council's should not ever "flatline" their Precept Demands but should arrive at their respective calculation via PBP (Policy, Budget, Precept). Accordingly, in her capacity of Responsible Finance Officer the CEO recommended that as a minimum the Council should always increase its Precept in line with inflation and take into account any community projects it wishes to undertake.

Responding to a question which had been raised by a member of the public, Cllr Pearman advised that whilst the Council had taken the decision to pay the sum demanded by the Local Government Pension Scheme in respect of the previous Clerk's early retirement on ill health grounds from its General Reserves back in 2011/12 and 2012/13, the Council had decided to spread the re-building of its General Reserves over a number of years. It was also stressed that during this period the Council had also decided to take on a number of tasks (e.g. provision of CCTV for the Town) and that it had been required to cover the costs of numerous By-elections, all of which had affected its budget/General Reserves.

Referencing the Public Interest Report which had occurred over three years ago, the CEO stated that she would be happy to meet members of the public to explain the Council's accounts and urged them to contact the office to arrange an appointment.

iii) **Question submitted by Ms K Gandy**

*Who is responsible for the maintenance of the car parks in Lydney, particularly the car park in Octavia Place, Lydney as the car park has become overgrown by vegetation and the drains in the car park have not been cleaned out for 10 years.*

Cllr Bevan read out the response which had been received from Mr B Watkins advising that whilst Octavia Place was a publically maintained Highway, the general road sweeping of urban areas was the responsibility of Forest of Dean District Council. It was noted that Mr Watkins had requested Gloucestershire County Council's contractor to conduct an inspection of Octavia Place; the contractor had also been instructed to remove any vegetation.

**Questions submitted from the Floor**

**Q** – I feel that the current restriction on the Bream Road car park exit has been a disaster which has worsened on flow of traffic from the Bream Road junction. Since the introduction of car park charges usage of the car park has gone from full to empty.

**A** – A temporary barrier was located to prevent cars from using the rear exit of the Bream Road car park as the car park was being used as a "rat run" and vehicles were exiting the car park at speed. Concern had been expressed for the safety of the public and young people. As the trial period for the temporary barrier has now expired, Lydney Town Council are pushing for its removal and replacement with a chicane system.

**Q** – If a suggestion is made to install a roundabout at the Bream Road junction it would not work; the junction needs traffic lights.

**A** – The requested chicane would reduce vehicle speed in the Bream Road car park and Gloucestershire County Council will be implementing parking restrictions in Bream Road, however, this action has been delayed due to an objection which had been received from a member of the public. A Town Council representative has attended a Lydney Air Quality Management meeting at Forest of Dean District Council and has suggested that the model which

was promoted at the meeting needed to be re-modelled in order to incorporate Dean Forest Railway timetables. The installation of traffic lights at the Bream Road junction had been included in the model.

12. **CLOSE**  
The meeting closed at 9.52 pm.