

Preston Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Meeting
held on Wednesday 13th May 2015
at 8.00pm in the Village Hall

Present: Councillors Mr M Burleigh
Mrs J Clark
Mr D Drew
Mr J N C Healey
Mrs P A Stark
Mrs M Trinder (Clerk)

In attendance Mr R G M Young (Treasurer)
Diane Day
County Councillor David Barnard

Seven members of the public: Sue Griffiths
David Keast
Mike Kellard
Ita Leaver
Sue Wallace-Woodroffe
Jenny Woolner
Mary Young

1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Mark Higgin, Anne Peck, Andy Cole, Richard Cole, Jenny Murray, Howard Trinder, PC Matt Jenkins, PCSO Heather Burrows, PCSO Michelle Trussell and District Councillor Faye Frost

2) Declaration of interests: There were no declarations of interests.

3) Co-option of Parish Councillor

Diane Day has expressed interest in filling the vacancy on the Parish Council. It was proposed by Councillor David Drew and seconded by Councillor Pam Stark that she be co-opted with immediate effect. The resolution was passed unanimously.

4) Election of Chairman

It was proposed by Councillor Pam Stark and seconded by Councillor David Drew that John Healey be elected as Chairman for the ensuing year. The resolution was passed unanimously.

5) Election of Vice Chairman

It was proposed by Councillor John Healey and seconded by Councillor Margaret Trinder that Pam Stark be elected as Vice Chairman for the ensuing year. The resolution was passed unanimously.

6) Appointment of Parish Clerk

It was proposed by Councillor Jane Clark and seconded by Councillor Pam Stark that Margaret Trinder be re-appointed as Clerk for the ensuing year. The resolution was passed unanimously.

7) Appointment of Treasurer

This was postponed until the next Parish Council meeting as the prospective appointee was unable to attend the AGM.

8) Minutes of the last AGM

The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 7 May 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

9) Chairman's Report

Preston Parish Council continues to meet every six weeks or so, with nine meetings in the past year. These are all public meetings and we keep a specific slot near the start of each meeting for public comments and queries.

As always, a good part of our responsibilities and work has been the long running routine that includes grass cutting, emptying of litter bins and dog bins, all sorts of repairs and maintenance of parish property, Health and Safety inspections, pond clearance, assessing and commenting on planning applications, checking roads footpaths and bridleways, grant submissions, all of these and many more. Some of them are our direct responsibility while others are discussed with and scheduled into the District and County Councils and their contractors.

We then have various projects and specific initiatives. For example we began the year looking for new play equipment and a children's slide for Church Meadow plus seating and a new table, financed mainly by grants including North Hertfordshire District Council and Hertfordshire County Council and a useful £4,000 grant from Luton Airport's Community Fund. We are ending the year working with the Cricket Club to raise grants of £25,000 for the main costs of new cricket nets, grant

applications that are continuing and not yet achieved. The Parish Council is the owner of the land at the Recreation Ground which is why we have some joint projects with the cricketers.

Two new defibrillators have recently been sourced, one is in the cricket pavilion and the other outside the Red Lion, supported by a maintenance programme for them and two completed training sessions for the public.

A systematic survey of trees on parish land was completed this spring, and dangerous and dead wood removed, and the trees are now on a tri-annual assessment cycle. Three of the village footpaths have been much improved, including resurfacing.

I must also recognise the individual volunteers around Preston who quietly step in from time to time on litter picking, snow clearance when needed, cleaning of occasional graffiti and on other jobs, and we do greatly appreciate their unsung input.

The Parish Council receives a range of consultation documents and other proposals, both national and local, to which we respond where needed and we are always glad to hear the concerns of villagers and to gain their involvement. A major example has been the Local Plan for an additional 12100 houses across the North Hertfordshire area, 36 proposed in Preston, which is a 23% increase and the fifth highest among more than 30 North Hertfordshire villages. Many of our residents have raised objections. The timing for these houses is over the 20 years to 2031, and some recently completed developments will count towards this number. In fact, with the inevitable on-going in-filling around the village with small developments of one or two houses, it is likely that the figure of an additional 36 can be achieved through natural growth.

What we have particularly objected to is any change to the village boundary, a boundary that was proposed by the planning authority in 2007 and agreed with us. Landowners and developers are pushing to open up two remaining small fields close to the village centre for yet more development and the proposal in the Local Plan to change the boundary would enable this. Preston wants to retain these last remaining fields for the benefit of the village overall into the future. We need the fields for many possibilities, including some green spaces for recreation, for outdoor play and sports areas, perhaps an extension to the primary school and some future affordable housing as we have a clear shortage of smaller homes. The fields are also very much part of the village character.

One final specific from the past year, has been the six Affordable Houses in Templars Lane. Work on the site was just starting a year ago. There has been inconvenience and upheaval for nearby residents, particularly the delivery traffic along Chequers Lane and the construction work itself.

The houses are finally completed and ready for occupation and I would urge anyone who has not already been round to go and take a look. The style of houses was the outright choice from a village poll. Both the builders, Crestel in Hitchin, and Howard Cottage Housing Association have taken real care over the appearance and the quality, inside and out. These are smaller houses/starter homes for the long term and are much needed in Preston.

We were disappointed that the valuations had included a substantial Preston premium. Nevertheless we are pleased to report that four of the houses have already been allocated to young people with Preston connections or from the immediate surrounding villages and wanting to move here and we hope they will very soon be settled into this community.

We enjoy the active support and assistance of our District and County Councillors and are very glad of their positive and straightforward help and contribution. We sometimes have chance to reciprocate and give them the Parish Council's support.

I shall now end, with the strongest of thanks to all my fellow councillors especially including our Parish Clerk Margaret Trinder and our Treasurer Robert Young and to our retiring councillor David Keast. It has been all of their continued work, experience and overall contributions throughout the past year that I have been trying to summarise tonight and without which the Parish of Preston would be a poorer place.

10) Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer explained that receipts for the year 2014 – 2015 were £21000. Of this, £6900 was from the rate payers and £11000 from grants for grass cutting, tree maintenance, footpath maintenance, play equipment and defibrillators. The Parish Council Bottle Tombola at the Village Day raised £166.50.

The expenditure was £22000 with major items related to one off projects such as the play equipment and footpath maintenance which were entirely grant funded. The pavilion verandah was refurbished at a cost of £1485 of which £1000 was from a grant and members of the Cricket Club laid it themselves.

On-going costs are £1470 for The Green with grass cutting costing £600, bi-annual pond maintenance costing £350 and the tree inspection £520. Church Meadow maintenance cost £550.

The Recreation Ground costs are £3050. Insurance is £984. The Cricket Club pay £200 towards this and they insure the equipment. Although the Parish Council own the equipment, the Cricket Club can get a better deal on insurance for it. Water cost £300 and electricity £618, with the Cricket Club paying half of these costs. Repairs were required on one of the roller doors in the pavilion and new gates and fencing round the shed cost £950.

At the end of the financial year, there is £24300 in the bank. £15300 is the General Fund, £6000 is provision for the pavilion and £3000 is grant funding carried forward.

Mike Kellard asked why, when the village hall and its surrounding land is owned by the Parish Council, was it never mentioned at the Parish Council AGM. It was acknowledged that the Parish Council are owners and trustees of the village hall on behalf of the Seebohm Trust. The Clerk has a copy of the deeds. The village hall committee are responsible for the management of the hall. The Parish Council receive

copies of their minutes, including their AGM, and their annual accounts. These are also available to members of the public on the village notice board. As the Parish Council play no part in the administration of the village hall accounts, it is deemed to be unnecessary to include these in the Treasurer's report at the Parish Council AGM.

The Chairman thanked Robert Young for his work as Parish Council Treasurer for 18½ years. This effort and commitment has been very much appreciated.

11) Reports by Local Organisations

The Chairman thanked all the members of the public who had come along to the meeting to listen to interesting reports from various organisations. The meeting continued with interesting reports by the following:

County Council Issues	County Councillor David Barnard
District Council Issues	District Councillor David Barnard
Herts Constabulary	Hitchin Rural Team (read by Clerk)
Neighbourhood Watch	Ita Leaver
Preston Nursery School	Jenny Woolner
Preston Primary School	Anne Peck (read by Clerk)
Princess Helena College	Sue Wallace-Woodroffe
St Martin's Church	Andy Cole (read by Clerk)
Friends of St Martin's	Sue Griffiths
Preston Cricket Club	Matt Burleigh
Preston Trust	Mike Kellard
Preston Village Society	Mary Young
The Red Lion	Howard Trinder (read by Clerk)
Village Hall Committee	Ita Leaver

12) Any other Business

12.1: Mobile Library Petition: The Clerk reminded everyone about the petition to support the retention of mobile libraries in Hertfordshire.

12.2: On behalf of the public, Mike Kellard thanked all Parish Councillors for their work and effort in the last year.

12.3: The Chairman thanked David Keast for his work on the Parish Council for 7 years. He has taken on and succeeded with Highways and Footpaths, which have been difficult roles to fulfil. His input at meetings will be missed.

13) Date and time of next AGM: Wednesday 4May 2016 at 8 p.m

The meeting closed at 9.37 p.m.

DRAFT