

PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 3rd June 2020 at 8 pm.

Present	Councillor	Mr M Burleigh Mrs J Clark Mr J Healey Miss A Marshall Mrs S Palmer Mrs P Stark Mrs M Trinder (Chairman)
In Attendance		Mrs L Lathane (Clerk & Treasurer)

The meeting was held by Zoom videoconferencing.

1) Apologies

None

2) Declaration of Interests

None

3) Minutes of Previous Meeting

These were agreed as a true record. They will be signed by the Chairman at the next physical meeting we are able to hold.

4) Matters Arising

4.1: Parking opposite the Recreation Ground: It was agreed that parking opposite the Recreation Ground was partly the residents of Spindle Cottage and partly people going for a walk. It was agreed that no action would be taken until after Covid 19.

4.2: Kissing gate behind the Church: This has not been done yet because the contractor is currently unable to buy a post but the old gate has been taken away. At the moment, people can walk through to Church Meadow without touching anything so the Parish Council agreed to ask the contractor to delay replacing the gate until circumstances change. The Chairman will inform Malcolm Lowle of this decision.

4.3: The hedge in Church Meadow: Mr Dawes has not cut back the hedge yet and it is too late to do so now because of nesting birds. He has been asked to delay this until the Autumn.

4.4: The Well: Frank Gormill has pointed up the base of the well.

4.5: Newsletter Costs: The Chairman has received the costs of printing the newsletter from Wally Steele. For the first 6 months of the year this was £41.37 and since April £27.29. It was agreed that the Parish Council would share the cost from January with Preston Trust and St Martin's Church. Disposable gloves are being provided to the delivery team so they will be an additional expense for a few months but the cost will be provided when they are no longer necessary. The Chairman will inform Wally Steele of this decision.

4.6: Gates: Signs have been put on the pedestrian gates at Castlefield asking for them to remain open to avoid possible infection with Covid 19.

4.7: Hedge along School Lane: Ollie Berti has now cut the Altham's roadside hedge along School Lane.

4.8: Fencing by Bunyans Cottage: A stretch of fencing has now been erected alongside the driveway to Bunyans Cottage to prevent access to Preston Valley.

4.9: Tatmore Loop Leaflets: The leaflet dispenser on The Green has been replenished and the ivy trimmed from the telegraph pole. Councillor Clark is obtaining quotes for printing more leaflets.

Action: The Chairman to inform Malcolm Lowle of the decision regarding the gate.

Action: The Chairman to inform Wally Steele that the Parish Council have agreed to contribute a third towards costs of the Village Newsletter.

Action: Councillor Clark to obtain quotes for Walk Leaflet printing.

5) Minutes of the AGM

These were agreed as a true record. They will be signed by the Chairman at the next physical meeting we are able to hold.

6) Matter arising from the AGM

None.

7) Comments from the Public

7.1: Boundary House: The tenants at Boundary House have contacted the Clerk regarding trees on the Recreation Ground that overhang into their garden. They are having issues with pigeons sitting in the branches and messing in their garden. It was agreed that Louis

Harrington-Smith should be asked to quote for cutting the branches back. The Clerk will organise this.

Action: The Clerk will request a quote from Louis Harrington-Smith

8) Police Update

As the last police update was received in June 2018, two years ago, it was agreed that it would no longer be an agenda item at each meeting. Any future updates will be added to the Clerk's report.

9) County and District Update

None

10) Planning Applications

10.1: Land off Castlefield: Councillor Trinder has been in contact with the Interim Planning Consultant at NHDC who reports that NHDC has instructed and expect very shortly a desktop report on surface water drainage options for the site. Indications are that they will need to undertake further investigations physically on site which may take a further month. The timetable for going to market is therefore likely to be at some point in July.

10.2: Glebe House Access: The valuation report has been received and will be circulated to the Parish Council. Councillor Trinder briefly talked through how the valuation was calculated. She informed the Parish Council that Mr Cherry now has an alternative suggestion. As the land has been deregistered as village green, he is asking if the Parish Council will grant him right of way over this particular piece of land and he would surrender his existing right of way at the gate with a small ex-gratia payment to the Parish Council.

The Parish Council agreed that legal advice was required to enable it to make a decision on this suggestion. Councillor Trinder will inform Mr Cherry of this decision and will contact Steven Haynes at Foreman Laws for advice. Mr Cherry has already agreed that he will continue to pay the Parish Council expenses.

10.3: Barn Adjacent to Dower House: Conditional Consent has been granted.

10.4: Reeves Cottage: Conditional Permission has been granted.

10.5: Hill Cottage: A Planning Consultation has been received from North Hertfordshire District Council. It is for Permission & Listed Building Consent at Hill Cottage, Hitchwood Lane for: Replacement rear windows, insertion of two rear door openings at ground level and recladding of existing dormer on rear elevation. It was unanimously agreed that the Clerk will submit a letter of support from the Parish Council.

Action: The Chairman to circulate the valuation report.

Action: The Chairman will inform Mr Cherry of the Parish Council's decision to seek legal advice and will then contact Steven Haynes.

Action: The Clerk to submit a letter of support for Hill Cottage

11) Cricket Club Representation

11.1: Pavilion Electrical Work: The 5-year installation inspection took place on Wednesday 27 May. A fuse board breaker had to be changed so that the installation meets required standards. This cost £65. At the same time, the shutter switches were replaced and the PAT testing was undertaken.

11.2: Pavilion Fire Safety: Councillor Trinder is working with the Cricket Club on the fire risk assessment which is a requirement of the Parish Council insurance. This includes the provision of a fire log book and associated policies. She will sign off the risk assessment for the Parish Council when everything is in place. A member of the cricket club is a fireman who is helping with the paperwork.

The fire extinguishers and fire blanket in the pavilion are all out of date and need to be replaced. Councillor Trinder had circulated quotations prior to the meeting and it was agreed to accept that of Fire Guard Services at a cost of £185 + VAT. The Parish Council agreed to take out an annual service contract at £50 per annum for three years.

The emergency lighting needs checking and possibly replacing. It is a legal requirement for all non-domestic buildings. It was agreed that Councillor Trinder would liaise with Fire Guard Services initially on what is required.

It was agreed that Councillor Palmer would contact Hitchin fire station about the possibility of having a smoke alarm installed free of charge in the corridor.

11.3: Pavilion shutters: The shutter at the pavilion which was repaired last year because it wouldn't close fully has got the same problem again, but the gap is smaller. It was decided to have the shutter service undertaken and the repair done as soon as possible.

11.4: Broken Window: A member of the cricket club has ordered the glass for the window which was broken in last year's break-in. This will cost £10 - £15. A member of the Cricket Club will install it.

9.4: Cricket Season: Councillor Burleigh informed the meeting that cricket may be able to start this season, but as of yet the Cricket Club don't have a date. The England Cricket Board is in discussion as to how to make it work safely. It may be that there is no access to the Pavilion, other than for toilets. Teas wouldn't be provided.

There are signs on the nets saying that these are currently out of use, due to Covid-19. If these are reopened it would be under strict guidelines and only for members.

Action: The Chairman to arrange for new firefighting equipment to be installed and to take out the Annual Service Contract for the Fire Extinguishers.

Action: The Chairman to liaise with Fire Guard Services about emergency lighting.

Action: Councillor Palmer to contact Hitchin Fire Station regarding smoke alarms installation.

Action: The Chairman to organise to have the shutters serviced and the repair carried out.

12) Hertfordshire Highways Update

The work on the corner of Butchers Lane was completed during the week beginning 4 May and the whole junction now looks very good. The Chairman has emailed her contacts at Ringway and Highways Locality to thank them for organising this work.

The Chairman asked Councillor Marshall if she would take over the role of Highways Liaison. Councillor Marshall agreed to this. The Chairman will inform our Highways contacts and will provide Councillor Marshall with the necessary information.

Action: The Chairman to inform our Highways contacts that Councillor Marshall will be working with them in future.

13) Parish Paths Partnership

13.1: Permissive Path: The information boards are in place and there has been a lot of positive feedback on them.

The ‘No cycling’ signs are in place. Some cyclists are still being seen in the wood but this was to be expected and numbers are definitely lower than before.

There has been a spate of graffiti along the footpaths referring to furloughed workers. Fortunately this was only in chalk so easily removed. There has to date not been any further incidents.

The Parish Council, the Cricket Club, The Preston Trust and Pilkington Farms are awaiting a response from Andrew Burton, the Senior Rights of Way Officer at HCC, to verify if we can legally install some gates along the route from Tatmore Hills to the recreation ground and at Bunyans cottage.

The Clerk has liaised with Councillor Barnard as to whether we could apply to his Locality Budget to offset some of the cost. He has asked that we approach him again when we have some idea of costs.

13.2: Fallen branch: A large fallen branch has been removed from the footpath which leaves Wain Wood heading to Tatmore Hills.

13.3: Hog Weed: The Hog weed along the footpath from Chequers Lane to Wain Wood has been sprayed. This is a bi-annual weed which is poisonous. David Clark will keep an eye out for it in the future and spray it off earlier before it gets so tall.

14) The Green: The trees have been pruned and The Green fertilised. The Green has since been cut but shorter than it should have been. Consideration needs to be given as the best way to preserve The Green in view of the current dry weather and lack of rain.

The Clerk has spoken to the contractor who is willing look into cutting The Green with a different mower and only when asked to do so by the Parish Council.

Councillor Trinder reported that Wally Steele has suggested that Preston Trust and other volunteers could cut the grass instead of the contractor. Following discussion of the pros and cons of this suggestion, the Parish Council decided that they would continue to use their contractor but would liaise with him more regularly on the condition of The Green. Councillor Trinder will inform Wally Steele of this decision.

14.1: Strimming at Church Meadow: It was agreed that the Clerk will ask Mr Dawes to strim around the fruit trees on his next cut in Preston. We will then keep an eye on when we would like it done again. It was also agreed to ask him to strim the triangle area on the corner of Back Lane and Crunnells Green.

Action: The Chairman to inform Wally Steele of the decision regarding grass cutting.

Action: The Clerk to liaise with Mr Dawes about strimming in Church Meadow and Back Lane.

15) Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that she and the Clerk have received and accepted an invitation to a Zoom meeting with Bim Afolami on the future of Parish Councils on Tuesday 9 June. The meeting will discuss the challenges facing Parish Councils during the Corona Virus crisis and will then ascertain where specific support is required from the Government to ensure Parish Councils can operate in the future.

Councillor Burleigh asked that the matter of grants that Parish Councils are able to apply for be raised as an important issue affecting the running of the village.

16) Clerk's Report

None

17) Treasurer's Report

Preston Parish Council - Summary Financial Report as at 3rd June 2020

Community Account

		£	£
Balance as at:	22nd April 2020		<u>£ 3,296.97</u>

Payments authorised at meeting:

Date	Recipient		
06 November 2019	Clerk Wages	£	299.47
24th April 2020	E.on - Direct Debit	£	304.29
29th April 2020	Clerk Wages	£	307.62
6th May 2020	Came and Company - Insurance Payment	£	877.28
18th May 2020	Frank Gormill - Well Repointing	£	125.00
21st May 2020	Kaspersky - Laptop Virus Protection	£	44.99
26th May 2020	Louis Harrington-Smith - Tree Work	£	690.00
26th May 2020	Trinity Lawn Care	£	120.00
28th May 2020	Clerk Wages	£	282.13
29th May 2020	E.on - Direct Debit	£	18.18
29th May 2020	Oliver Russell Ltd	£	512.40
2nd June 2020	Hugh Greenhouse & Co	£	500.00
		<u>£</u>	<u>4,081.36</u>

Monies received:

Date	From		
11th March 2020	Locality Budget Grant	£	250.00
20th May 2020	HMRC - VAT Reclaim	£	661.62
22nd May 2020	Mark Cherry - Expenses Contribution	£	500.00
		<u>£</u>	<u>1,411.62</u>

Balance as at:	3rd June 2020		<u>£ 627.23</u>
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Business Premium Account

Balance as at:	22nd April 2020		<u>£ 13,180.21</u>
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Monies Received

3rd September 2018	Interest Received	£	6.57
3rd December 2018	Interest Received	£	6.57
4th March 2019	Interest Received	£	6.58
3rd June 2019	Interest Received	£	6.58
2nd September 2019	Interest Received	£	6.59
2nd December 2019	Interest Received	£	6.59
2nd March 2020	Interest Received	£	4.64

Balance as at:	3rd June 2020		<u>£ 13,224.33</u>
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Business Premium Account No.2

Balance as at:	3rd June 2020		<u>£ 6.02</u>
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Total bank balances £ 13,857.58

As part of her report, the Treasurer pointed out to the Parish Council that there was a very small amount of money in the Community Account and the next half of the precept would not be received until September. As we have a lot of expenditure coming up, she asked for agreement to transfer £2000 from the Business Premium Account to the Community Account. The Parish Council agreed to this request and that a further £1000 could be transferred if necessary. It was also agreed that the Business Premium Account No. 2 would be closed and the £6.02 transferred to the Community Account.

17.1: Budget Monitoring: The Clerk had circulated the current budget for 2020/2021 to the Parish Council ahead of the meeting. The Councillors had no questions regarding the budget.

17.2: Review of Internal Audit: The accounts for the year ended March 31 2020 have been audited by Mr Nick Broughton, the Parish Council's internal auditor. The Parish Council reviewed the internal audit, considering scope of the audit, the independence and competence of the auditor, their own responsibilities in respect of the financial controls of the Council, and the report of the internal auditor. The Parish Council is satisfied that the internal control has been both thorough and effective.

The outstanding cheques for the 2017/2018 Financial Year were discussed. Two of the cheques had been re-issued already so the outstanding cheques can be officially written off. The third cheque is now out of date so unless the recipient can be contacted, it will also be written off.

A cheque sent to The Preston Trust in December in regards to the Litter Pick has yet to be cashed. The Clerk will investigate what may have happened.

The comments made by the auditor regarding the asset register were noted. The Chairman and the Clerk will work on this and will bring a final version to the September meeting.

17.3: Audit Return: The Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended March 31 2020 was considered and approved by the Parish Council. Parts 1 and 2 will be signed by the Chairman and the Clerk by arrangement due to Covid-19, and done so safely whilst socially distancing.

17.4: Risk Assessments: It was agreed that the wording on the playground equipment item should be changed to checks rather than inspection. The Chairman has asked Councillor Palmer if she would walk through both playgrounds once a month to make sure that all is well, noting anything which is obviously wrong with the equipment and the site. The Chairman has also asked Councillor Healey if he will undertake a more detailed check two or three times a year. Both have agreed to these suggestions.

Councillor Palmer informed the meeting that she had noticed that the two swing seats at the Recreation Ground were splitting. It was agreed that Councillor Clark will email her contact regarding playground equipment and ask for a quote to replace both.

Councillor Burleigh pointed out that emptying of the septic tank is not included in the risk assessment. This item will be added.

Action: The Clerk to speak to the Preston Trust regarding the outstanding cheque.
Action: The Chairman and the Clerk to look into the remaining outstanding cheque.
Action: The Chairman and the Clerk to finalise the asset register
Action: The Chairman and the Clerk to organise the signing of the Audit Forms.
Action: The Clerk to submit the signed Audit Return.
Action: The Chairman to add emptying of the septic tank to the Risk Assessments
Action: Councillor Clark to obtain a quote to replace the swing seats.

18) Corona Virus Update

The Preston help line will be in place for as long as it is needed. It is working well, although there are very few requests for help. A number of people have organised help with friends and neighbours. The Red Lion take away service has been well received.

It was agreed that the July Parish Council meeting will again take place via Zoom Video conferencing.

19) Any Other Business

Councillor Stark asked if there were any signs that could be put up at the top of Butchers Lane regarding cyclists and the speed they ride down the lane. It was noted that signs can only be put up by Highways. It was agreed that there aren't any suitable signs that could be used for this situation..

20) Date and Time of next Meeting: Monday 20th July 2020 at 8 pm.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.