

Parish of Preston
PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday 3rd March 2021 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		Councillor David Barnard Mrs L Lathane (Clerk & Treasurer)

The meeting was held by Zoom video conferencing.

1) Apologies

None

2) Declaration of Interests

None.

3) Minutes of Previous Meeting

These were agreed and will be signed at a later date.

4) Matters Arising

4.1: Neighbourhood Plan Books: The books arrived on Monday 18 January and were all delivered by the end of the day on Tuesday 19 January.

4.2: Bench round tree on The Green: It was agreed that a 150m teak bench would be installed on The Green near the same tree as the previous bench, facing the Red Lion. It will have security fixings for soft ground.

4.3: Fruit Trees in Church Meadow: The advice from a local resident was that as we don't plan to use the fruit, we should let the trees grow without giving them any attention. Any

which die can be taken out. When they get bigger and crowded, some can be removed. The Parish Council agreed to this strategy.

The oak tree which was planted by Preston Trust in 2012 will need some work in due course and to prevent it growing too far into the main pathway. Two lower branches need to be removed. The Chairman will organise this.

4.4: Hedge Waste in Church Meadow: The hedge waste has now been removed.

4.5: Grant Application: County Councillor David Barnard has allocated £200 as a grant towards pond maintenance. Councillor Clark will speak to Max Boreham regarding work on the pond.

Action: The Chairman to liaise with the village resident about the bench.

Action: The Chairman to organise the removal of the branches on the oak tree.

Action: Councillor Clark to speak to Max Boreham about the pond.

5) Comments from the public

None.

6) County and District Update

6.1: 20mph Speed Limits: Councillor Barnard is constantly pressurising County, and the Police, to make it simpler to install speed limits of 20mph. Their argument is that it will have little effect on the behaviour of drivers who speed anyway, and that the limits will be impossible to enforce.

6.2: Elections: Local elections are to be held on the 6th May. Councillor Barnard urges residents to ensure they are registered to vote. Postal votes are possible for those who wish to vote remotely. There will be more Polling Station volunteers this year who will be sanitising booths and ensuring the process is Covid safe.

6.3: Grants: The grant pots are closed now for this financial year.

6.4: Fit, Fed & Read: Councillor Barnard informed the meeting of a holiday activity programme that includes support with literacy. It will be taking place in Hertfordshire's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, with a nutritious meal every day, free of charge. Participants need to be aged between 8-11 years and eligible for free school meals.

6.5: Council Tax: The Council has voted for the maximum allowable increase.

6.6: Police: There is currently an increase in car crime in our villages and also the use of drugs, in particular small gas canisters. Councillor Barnard is pushing for a greater police presence in our villages, especially at night, to deter these activities. On Thursday Councillor Barnard will be attending the Southern Rural Committee Meeting where there will be a talk

from Sgt Westwood. Councillor Barnard will be pushing for more liaison from the Police with our villages.

6.7: Trees: Councillor Barnard informed the meeting of an NHDC scheme where residents can get a free tree for their garden. It was agreed that Preston Parish Council will ask residents to put in their order to the Clerk by the end of May. We will then submit a request to Councillor Barnard.

Action: Information regarding the tree scheme to be put into the Newsletter.

7) Planning Applications

7.1: Hill Cottage: Change of use from agricultural land to residential and retention of detached outbuilding in rear garden. The Parish Council had no objections to either of these applications.

7.2: 5 Dower House: This application was discussed. Further research is required which will be undertaken and a response agreed by email as soon as possible.

7.3: Kiln Wood Cottage: Planning Consent has been granted.

7.4: Land adjacent to Dungarvan: Planning consent has been granted.

7.5: Land to the rear of 3 Crunnells Green: Planning consent for the outbuilding has been granted.

7.6: 15 Chequers Lane: The Parish Council supported this application and consent has been granted.

7.7: Land off Castlefield: Information from NHDC is that contracts have just been exchanged with Osprey Homes of Stevenage on a subject to planning basis and they will be submitting a planning application for residential development of the site in due course.

7.8: Glebe House Access: The Chairman has been contacted by Morag Norgan regarding access to Glebe House for the proposed new dwelling. Her proposal is in 2 parts:

- A sum of money for the outright purchase of the land.
- Preston Parish Council to pay their own legal and other costs.

The Parish Council discussed the amount offered and before making a decision as to whether they accept it, they will take advice from other Parish Councils and the SLCC. This is an unusual situation and the Parish Council must ensure that they don't set precedents which may cause issues for any future requests to purchase Parish Council land.

Costs for the Parish Council will be to insert two public notices in The Comet for two consecutive weeks and the legal costs to agree the sale.

Action: The Clerk to send a response of No Objection for the Hill Cottage applications.

Action: The Clerk to send a response on the 5 Dower House application when it has been agreed.

Action: The Clerk and the Chairman to seek advice from other Parish Councils and the SLCC on Glebe House.

8) Cricket Club Representation

Preston Cricket Club hopes to start the season on time in Mid-April. Restrictions will still be in place at the start of the season, for example the tea room and changing rooms won't be used.

Red Stripe will be required to empty the cesspit in April. Councillor Burleigh will organise this.

Action: Councillor Burleigh to organise Red Stripe.

9) Hertfordshire Highways Update

9.1: Highways Liaison Meeting: Councillor Marshall attended a Highways Liaison Meeting on 15 February 2021. Unfortunately the Electric Vehicle Charging item was not covered due to the absence of the speaker.

Speed Management Strategy was discussed and 20mph limits and zones have been simplified to 20mph areas however it was noted that enforcement is not a priority.

Sustainable Travel Towns initiative will be trialled in Royston, Letchworth and Stevenage. The aim is to reduce the use of cars in towns, particularly single occupancy.

Flooding and Drainage was also covered. Hitchwood flooding is listed but no mention was made of Charlton Road flooding. It was agreed that Councillor Marshall will contact the Flooding and Drainage Group to ask for the ditches to be dug out again along Charlton Road to deal with the flooding.

A further Highways Liaison Meeting will be scheduled in six months.

Action: Councillor Marshall to contact Ringway and the Flooding and Drainage Group regarding the flooding on Charlton Road.

10) Parish Paths Partnership

10.1: Kissing Gate: The kissing gate at the back of the Recreation Ground is due to be fitted in its new location in the next couple of weeks. The existing gate will be blocked off.

10.2: Graffiti: The No Cycling sign on the gate at the Recreation Ground has been spray painted over. The Cricket Club is organising a replacement.

10.3: Salt Bins: It was agreed that Councillor Clark will fill the salt bins at Poynders End and Preston Hill.

Action: Councillor Clark to organise the fitting of the new gate in the Recreation Ground.

Action: Councillor Clark to fill the salt bins.

11) Parking round The Green: The Parish Council discussed the options of alternative parking and agreed that the hard standing on Back Lane and the lay by on Church Lane would be options for busy weekends when we want to avoid cars parking on The Green. Signs would be placed on The Green so that visitors to the village are directed to these areas. Before doing this, a note will be placed in the next newsletter informing residents of this plan and asking for comments which will be discussed at the next meeting on 21st April.

Action: A note regarding parking on Back Lane and the lay by on Church Lane to be put in the next newsletter.

12) Chairman's Report

12.1: Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan: The Chairman has received details of Ashwell's Neighbourhood Plan regulation 16 consultation. It was agreed that the Parish Council wouldn't respond to this consultation.

12.2: Southern Rural Committee Meeting: The Chairman and the Clerk have been invited to attend the Southern Rural Committee meeting on Thursday 4 March which includes an update from the Police on their work in the Southern Rural area.

13) Clerk's Report

13.1: Meeting Dates: It was agreed that Preston Parish Council's meetings will move to a Thursday for the upcoming year.

13.2: Southern Rural Committee grants: Kings Walden Parish Council has successfully applied for a Southern Rural Grant, which indicates that Parish Councils are now able again to apply for this grant. It was agreed that there is nothing pressing that we would need to apply to this grant for at the present moment. It was suggested that Preston Primary School should apply for money towards the outdoor learning area that they are currently fundraising for.

Action: Councillor Clark to speak to the PSA at Preston Primary School about the Southern Rural Grant.

14) Treasurer's Report

Preston Parish Council - Summary Financial Report as at 3rd March 2021

Community Account		£	£
Balance as at:	13th January 2021		<u>£ 1,740.06</u>
Payments authorised at meeting:			
Date	Recipient		
22nd January 2021	SLCC Membership Renewal	£	80.00
26th January 2021	Clerks Wages	£	267.11
28th January 2021	NHDC Dog Bins & Bin Maintenance	£	425.64
28th January 2021	E.on	£	53.46
26th February 2021	Clerks Wages	£	322.83
1st March 2021	E.on	£	117.39
			<u>£ 1,266.43</u>
Monies received:			
Date	From		
29th January 2021	Locality Budget Grant	£	200.00
3rd February 2021	Preston Cricket Club Annual Payment	£	561.97
			<u>£ 761.97</u>
Balance as at:	3rd March 2021		<u>£ 1,235.60</u>
Business Premium Account			
Balance as at:	13th January 2021		<u>£ 10,229.67</u>
Monies Received			
			<u>£ -</u>
Balance as at:	3rd March 2021		<u>£ 10,229.67</u>
		Total bank balances	£ 11,465.27

14.1: Renewal of E-On Direct Debit Contract: It was agreed to continue with the Direct Debit contract with E.on.

14.2: Movement of funds: It was agreed that the Clerk could move £500 from the Saver Account to the Community Account in early April should it be necessary.

14.2: Handwritten Accounts: Nick Broughton has agreed to carry out our internal audit again this year. It was agreed that the Clerk could stop using the handwritten ledger as from now, and that spreadsheets showing our accounts could be used for the internal audit. The Clerk will liaise with Nick regarding the accounts and audit.

Action: The Clerk to liaise with Nick Broughton.

15) Playground Reports

15.1: Playground Equipment: Councillor Palmer has cleaned the swing seats. Nothing else currently needs to be done.

15.2: Benches: It was agreed that Councillor Healey will carry out some maintenance on the bench owned by the Parish Council in Church Meadow.

Action: Councillor Healey to carry out bench maintenance.

16) New LGA Model Code of Conduct for Councillors

It was agreed that we will consider the new Code of Conduct in two years' time when we have to agree it when taking up new terms of office.

17: Corona Virus Update

If the lockdown restrictions go to plan, we may be able to have a normal meeting in July. The AGM will have to be via Zoom again, with organisations sending their reports in advance.

18) Any Other Business

None

19) Date and Time of next Meeting: Wednesday 21st April 2021 at 8 pm.

The meeting ended at 10.08pm