

# Preston Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting  
held on Thursday 12th May 2022  
at 8.00pm at Village Hall, Preston

**Present:** Councillors Mr M Burleigh  
Mrs J Clark  
Miss A Marshall  
Mrs S Palmer  
Mrs P Stark  
Mrs M Trinder (Chairman)

In attendance Lisa Lathane (Clerk & Treasurer)

Eight members of public

**1) Apologies:** None

## **2) Minutes of the 2021 AGM:**

The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 5 May 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman at the Parish Council meeting on Thursday 10 June 2021.

## **3) Annual Report**

Those of you who have been regular attendees at these meetings will notice that the format has changed this year. Following research and Lisa's Clerk's training, we have established that we should have 2 meetings: an Annual Parish Council Meeting at which Chairman and Vice Chairman are elected and an Annual Parish Meeting when the reports from the Parish Council, County and District Councillors, the Police and local village organisations are delivered.

This is the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Parish Council Meeting was held immediately before this one, although both meetings will not necessarily be held on the same evening in future.

Another change which has been made in the last civic year, which is since last May, is the way the agendas for Parish Council meetings are published. The Parish Council meets on Thursdays and the agenda is published towards the end of the week before, giving the required three clear days before the meeting. Additional items cannot be added after publication of the agenda. On the Tuesday before the meeting, the master agenda is published which includes further details of what is to be discussed including financial

transactions and planning applications. This system provides more transparency and enables residents to see what is due to be discussed.

As always, residents are welcome to attend Parish Council meetings but in the short term we ask that people notify Lisa in advance so that we can prepare socially distanced seating to ensure everyone's safety.

There have been 9 Parish Council Meetings in the last year with an overall attendance of 90%.

One of the main areas of work for the Parish Council is responding to Planning Applications. Last year we had 13 in total. This year, from May 2021 to the end of April 2022, we have had 19 householder applications, one for Vicar's Grove, one for the expansion of passenger numbers at Luton airport and the two developments in Preston: land West of Castlefield and land adjacent to Dungarvan.

The Parish Council submitted detailed responses to the two developments and following liaison with The Preston Trust and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, I represented the village at the Planning Control Meetings with the script being agreed in advance by all three organisations.

As you all know both developments were granted consent, providing more houses than a lot of Preston residents would have liked. Although Planning Officers have to take all the comments they receive into account when making their decision on the outcome of the application, at the present time North Hertfordshire's lack of land supply and the need to build as many dwellings as possible seems to take precedence over all other reasons put forward.

The Parish Council maintains the pavilion, the play equipment in both Church Meadow and the Recreation Ground, the pond, The Green and the village trees.

The Cricket Club is responsible for grass cutting and hedge trimming in the Recreation Ground as part of its licence to use it for cricket matches.

Councillor Clark keeps a close eye on the footpaths within the Parish and takes appropriate action if required, as well as liaising with Rights of Way at Hertfordshire County Council. Councillor Marshall liaises with Hertfordshire Highways to address issues which affect the community as they arise and to highlight work which might be undertaken as part of long term planning.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank John Healey for all his work as a Parish Councillor for just under 19 years when, as well as being a Parish Councillor, he was Vice Chairman for 6 years and Chairman for 5 and a half years.

John did a lot of behind the scenes, time consuming work on maintaining the playground equipment in both Church Meadow and the Recreation Ground but one of his most important achievements as a Parish Councillor is his work to prevent the hard surfacing of Dead Woman's Lane in 2005. Many of us here this evening will be grateful to him for this outcome from which we benefit when out walking.

The Parish Council is now in the process of recruiting a new Parish Councillor which we hope to do at our next meeting on 9 June.

The Parish Council is grateful to the many volunteers from the village who work hard and often unnoticed in a variety of ways, in particular by litter picking, to protect the local environment, which is organised twice a year by The Preston Trust.

David Clark has used his skills to repair the lock on the kissing gate at Wain Wood and to adapt the cricket club's mower so that it can be taken in and out of the shed more easily. This help is appreciated and has saved some money.

The Parish Council is particularly grateful to Pam Biggs who undertakes the weekly checks on the defibrillator in the Red Lion carpark to ensure that it is always in working order. The defibrillator was used for the first time a few weeks ago. We have funding from the NHDC Southern Rural Committee for a new cabinet as the original one is deteriorating.

I would also like to thank the Preston Platinum Jubilee Celebrations Committee for all their work so far in organising what promises to be an eventful weekend for the whole community. This is also a suitable opportunity to thank County Councillor David Barnard for a grant of £279 towards the costs of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations.

I am very grateful to Lisa, our Clerk, who is also Responsible Financial Officer, for all her work and support this year. As mentioned earlier, Lisa is undertaking the Clerk's qualification as part of her role in a neighbouring Parish Council which is proving to be beneficial to Preston too.

The Parish Council is a corporate body and none of the initiatives and activities I have described here could take place without everyone playing their part and contributing to the democratic decision making process. I am grateful to all the Parish Councillors for their support as we strive to maintain and enhance the Parish of Preston. We will continue to do this in the next year to the best of our abilities.

#### **4) Treasurer's Report**

At the start of the 2021/22 financial year the Parish Council had funds of £10,086 which were later supplemented by income of £39,737.87, the largest part of which came from the sale of a small pocket of land, officially known as Village Green, owned by the Parish Council on Chequers Lane. The sale of this land led to a payment to the Parish Council of £22,708.90. Legally this money can only be spent on either the purchase or maintenance of capital assets. In the last financial year an amount of £8300 was received as precept from NHDC. We also claimed back £656.06 in VAT and received grants totalling £956.

We spent £704 on grass cutting on the Village Green/pond and £472 on Church Meadow. We have spent £4510.78 on the Recreation Ground and Pavilion where some significant maintenance was required last year, although some of this amount was offset by a contribution from the Cricket Club.

At the end of the financial year the Parish Council had £31,462.29 in the bank.

#### **5) Reports from County and District Councillors**

None

#### **6) Police Report**

#### **7) Reports by Local Organisations**

The following organisations addressed the meeting:

Preston Primary School  
Preston Cricket Club  
Village Hall Committee  
Neighbourhood Watch  
St Martin's Church  
The Red Lion

#### **8) Any other Business:**

None

**10) Date and time of next ANNUAL PARISH MEETING:** To be decided.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.