

# **Preston Parish Council**

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting  
held on Thursday 22nd May 2025  
at 8.15pm at Village Hall, Preston

Present: Councillors: Sharon Anderson, Julie Buckland, Matt Burleigh, Jane Clark, Ali Morecroft, Helen Page, Margaret Trinder (Chairman)

In attendance: One member of public and Lisa Lathane (Clerk & RFO)

**1) Apologies:** None.

## **2) Minutes of the 2024 APM:**

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 23 May 2024 were approved by members and signed by the Chairman.

## **3) Annual Report**

There have been 8 Parish Council Meetings and the Annual Parish Meeting in the last year with an overall attendance of 82% which shows commitment and dedication from members.

During the year, we were sorry that Councillor Hill resigned but were pleased to welcome Councillor Page to the Parish Council

One of the main areas of work for the Parish Council is responding to Planning Applications. This year, from May 2024 to April 2025, we have had 8 applications, 2 of which were for the same property. The Parish Council responds to all planning applications and often has to ask the planning officer for an extension so that the application can be discussed at a meeting.

The largest application was for the redevelopment of Temple Dinsley. In June the Parish Council facilitated drop in sessions in the village hall so that Preston residents could be made aware of the plans and ask questions of the developer and his team. The Parish Council submitted its response to the planning application in September and I spoke in support of it at the Planning meeting on 30 January. At that meeting, consent for the main application and Listed Building Consent were granted. That is when preparation of the legal agreements began and it is hoped that they will be finalised by the end of this month. Until they are, work cannot begin on site.

The Parish Council applied for section 106 funding for a list of projects and those agreed are:

- £9,400 for a roundabout at the Millennium Playground
- £10,750 for a Multiverse Activity Centre at the Recreation Ground
- £4,236 for swings at the Recreation Ground

- £4,400 for a Picnic Area at the Millennium Playground,
  - £7,265 for Village Hall improvements
- In addition
- 2 tennis courts will be refurbished and made available to the village on a 75 year peppercorn rent.
  - New and existing permissive paths are being secured 'in perpetuity' via the S106 legal agreement.

The preliminary triggers for payment are that the Activity Centre and swings in the Recreation Ground and the picnic area in the Millennium playground will be paid prior to commencement and the roundabout at the Millennium playground and the village hall improvements will be paid prior to first occupation. When the legal agreements are finalised and published we will find out if the preliminary triggers have been adhered to.

The Parish Council undertook a community consultation on a 20mph speed limit in the village with the result that 87.7% of respondents supported the initiative. Preston was ranked 499 in the County wide list of zone areas and the funding for 20mph programmes is for up to 200 sites so we are not eligible.

It is possible that our County Councillor's Highway Locality Budget for 2025-2026 might be able to fund the first stage of the three year process for a 20mph limit. That would be for the collection and analysis of traffic data which would determine whether we could go to the next stage in the process. Following the elections, the Parish Council has contacted County Councillor David Barnard to ask if he will consider this but we haven't yet received a reply.

The Community Drive Safe initiative has started and will operate twice a week for two weeks, then have a two week break as Preston shares the equipment with Lilley. Vehicles are monitored and any traveling at 36mph or above receives a letter from the police about their speed. Because signs have to be put up to inform drivers that volunteers are checking speeds, they have the opportunity to slow down before reaching the Speed Indicator Device.

From the first 3 sessions, 3 cars were travelling at 36mph or above and 13 were travelling at 30 mph or above. This is out of a total of 256 cars. The busiest period was yesterday morning between 7.30 and 8.30 when 147 cars drove along School Lane. Although not required by the police, the volunteers are recording the number of vehicles travelling at 30 mph or above, hoping that it will help our campaign for a 20mph speed limit.

The Parish Council is grateful to the 9 volunteers who help with this and particularly the two lead volunteers who have to organise the sessions and collect and return the equipment to Lilley.

Following the closure of Preston Nursery School last summer, Lisa, our Clerk and myself have been supporting the Village Hall Committee. Lisa set up an online booking system and it is now part of the Clerk's job description so that the committee know that it will always be appropriately administered. We are

pleased that we have been able to arrange for Preston Pre-School to use the hall on weekdays in term time from 9am to 5pm.

The Parish Council was grateful for a grant from the Southern Rural Committee for a defibrillator cabinet and for a grant from County Councillor David Barnard's Locality Budget for the installation costs. This means that there is now a defibrillator attached to the pavilion which could be used if required in both Wain Wood and the Recreation Ground.

Three Information Boards are now installed in Wain Wood, funded by the Castlefield development and is the work of Councillor Clark.

A new initiative for the Parish Council is the Pavilion Working Group which has just been set up to look into extending the pavilion to increase its use by the wider community while at the same time making sure it meets the latest ECB criteria for cricket. The group consists of 3 Parish Councillors, 2 representatives of the cricket club and 2 invited recently new Preston residents. Other people with relevant skills will be invited to meetings as appropriate. The community will be informed of developments in due course.

The Parish Council is grateful to the many volunteers who work hard and often unnoticed in a variety of ways:

- Litter picking, organised twice a year by The Preston Trust.
- The VETS volunteers for emergency calls for the defibrillator at the Red Lion
- The Community Drive Safe Volunteers, already mentioned
- Pam Biggs, not a Preston resident, who maintains the defibrillators and trains the VETS volunteers

I am very grateful to Lisa, our Clerk, who is also Responsible Financial Officer, for all her work and support this year. I am grateful too for the support and commitment of all the Parish Councillors in the last busy year.

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. The decisions taken by the Parish Council are what it believes to be in the best interests of the wider community at that particular time.

The Parish Council will continue to work for the benefit of Preston residents in the next year to the best of its abilities.

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

At the start of the 2024/25 financial year the Parish Council had funds of £97,892 which were later supplemented by income of £25,204, the largest part of which came from the receipt of the precept from North Herts of £15,590.

The Parish Council also claimed back £1,835.47 in VAT. Also received was £1,766.24 from Preston Cricket Club for agreed costs at the Pavilion.

The Parish Council received a grant of £594 from Southern Rural for a defibrillator cabinet at the Pavilion. Also received was a Locality Budget grant of £205 from County Cllr David Barnard towards the installation of the cabinet.

Information Boards were designed and constructed for Wain Wood, at a cost of £4723.16, the majority of which came from Section 106 monies. £900 was spent on removing brambles from Church Meadow to open up the space for a future picnic area.

At the end of the financial year the Parish Council had £91313.43 in the bank. The majority of this amount is ring-fenced for specific future projects. The Parish Council has recently moved the majority of its reserves into high interest accounts, to spread the banking risk and to make the most of public money being held.

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

A report from District Councillor Joe Graziano was read out by the Chairman.

## **6) Police Report**

The clerk read out a report sent by the police.

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

Jacqui Fairey of Preston Village Pre-School addressed the meeting, reporting on the first few months of the new pre-school.

The following organisations sent reports which were read out by either the Clerk or the Chairman.

Neighbourhood Watch  
Friends of St Martin's Church  
Preston Cricket Club  
Preston Trust  
Village Hall Committee  
Preston Village Society  
The Red Lion

## **8) Open Forum**

No questions were asked.

**10) Date and time of next ANNUAL PARISH MEETING:** Thursday 21st May 2026.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.