

13/2019

PRESTON ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 22 MAY 2019, COMMENCING AT 7.30PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

1. To receive nominations for the position of Chair and Vice Chair.
Cllr Hanlon proposed and Cllr Luck seconded the appointed of Cllr McGrory as Chair. Cllr McGrory accepts the nomination.
Cllrs then agreed to co-opt Jack Tasker who had been a Parish Councillor in the previous Parish Council term.
Cllr Hanlon proposed and Cllr Luck seconded the appointed of Jack Tasker as Vice Chair. Cllr Tasker accepted the nomination.
2. Acceptance of Office Forms signed and witnessed by the Proper Officer/Clerk.
3. Apologies for absence:
(i) Cllr Martin sent his apologies as he had just returned from abroad.
Cllr McGrory had an emergency arise and therefore Cllr Hanlon agreed to Chair this meeting.
(ii) Cllrs consented to accept the apologies.
4. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest:
(i) Disclosures of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest for the agenda under discussion – none;
(ii) To receive declaration of gifts of hospitality received – none;
(iii) To consider requests for dispensation for pecuniary interest for the agenda under discussion – not applicable.
5. Minutes of Meetings: Clerk gave her apologies as the draft Minutes of 26 March were not yet available (Clerk had been unwell in recent months, but assured Cllrs that would be available within the next week); draft Minutes of 23 April 2019 available – Cllr Hanlon proposed and Cllr Tasker seconded that they were a true and accurate record. Cllr Hanlon signed and dated the Minutes.
6. Matters Arising:
Due to Parish elections and the statutory procedures before, during and after, matters had not progressed beyond that reported at the previous meeting.
Babergh District Council had only that evening announced the Leader of the Council (Mr John Ward – previous Leader of Babergh District Council) following the District elections.

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7. Report from County Councillor – Cllr Robert Lindsay sent his apologies. He was attending the Babergh first annual meeting post elections but sent a report to the Clerk as follows:-

Rural bus subsidy – new methodology

Last week passengers on the 112 bus that runs twice a week from Hadleigh via Kersey, Bildeston and Monks Eleigh to Sudbury were told that the bus would stop operating in June. Passenger transport officers at the county council confirmed this to me last week. I was very concerned that this route not be scrapped since so many people are dependent on it as their only means of getting to town and raised the issue with Cllr Mary Evans, cabinet member for highways and with the press. Cllr Evans told me this week that the bus is not scrapped and that the “administrative oversight” came about because the county had failed to respond to Norse about renewing their contract, so Norse cancelled.

The cabinet is next week considering a new methodology to determine what rural bus routes should get subsidies. One of the new criteria is that buses with a high proportion of elderly and disabled passengers should get a subsidy. This is undoubtedly the case on route 112.

Even though this bus route is no longer under threat, it is worth bearing in mind that the county council voted in its last budget to cut £30,000 from rural bus subsidies across the county. So the axe will undoubtedly fall elsewhere.

Children’s Centres Policy Development Panel

You may be aware from media reports, my group (made up of Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Councillors) made the decision to withdraw our representative from a Policy Development Panel that was looking into the future of family services in Suffolk. It became clear that the sole focus of the panel was on reducing the number of children’s centres in the county.

SEND Oversight Board

In my previous report, I informed you that a SEND Oversight Board would be established in response to Ofsted’s ruling that Suffolk County Council’s SEND services are “inadequate”. The board is made up of councilors, officers, clinical commissioning group staff and voluntary organisations such as Suffolk Parent Carer Network. The board met for the first time on Friday 26 April. However, despite our numerous requests to be involved, the administration have only invited one opposition representative from the Labour group. The Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group therefore doesn’t have the opportunity to input into these meetings. We understand that the Oversight Board will only be meeting four times a year, with the next meeting scheduled for September. Given the urgent need for

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improvement in the SEND service, I am concerned at how effective this board will be.

8. Report from District Councillor – Mr Robert Lindsay.

I am delighted and honoured to be elected the district councilor for Preston St Mary and the new ward of North West Cosford. I look forward to working with both Preston parish council and the village community – whichever way they voted – for the next four years, alongside my existing role as county councilor.

After the election the Conservatives on Babergh now have 15 councillors, and other political groups have 17, which means the Conservatives no longer have a majority.

The second largest group is the Independents with 8 councillors, the Green including myself with four councilors, LibDems with 3 and Labour with 2. I have been elected group leader of the new Green group on Babergh.

Babergh council used to be run by a “committee system” which involved councilors from all parties by proportion to the size of their groups in decision making. When the Conservatives won their first majority in 2015, they moved to a cabinet system with the leader choosing his or her own cabinet. By law this cannot be changed for five years.

So although the non Conservatives are keen to revert to the committee system – we will have to stick with the cabinet system for at least the next three years.

Under the cabinet system, the council elects a leader for four years at its first meeting and that person selects his or her cabinet. Before the council’s first annual meeting on May 22, the Conservatives, Independents and Lib Dems agreed that John Ward, the Conservative councilor would continue as leader and that they would form an eight member cabinet between them. There will be 4 Conservatives, 3 Independents and 1 LibDem and no Green.

I made clear before and as the 22nd May meeting that the Green group, given that we have one eighth of the council seats, should have a cabinet seat and so would not support John Ward’s election as leader. However, we were out-voted. I will be part of an informal “political leaders group” at which I can share the views of my group but this comes with no decision making powers. I will serve on the audit and standards committee and one each of my Green colleagues will serve on all other committees including planning and scrutiny.

9. Public Forum: no questions/comments

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10. Correspondence:

General correspondence had been circulated by email. No significant correspondence to discuss.

11. Clerk's Report:

Clerk reported that she had been unwell in the last few weeks. Cllrs agreed to an Additional Meeting in June/July to deal with financial matters to include approve Audit for 2018/2019. Clerk will arrange meeting date.

Councillors all agreed that the Audit would be dealt with by including a Certificate of Exemption for 2018/19.

12. Review of Standing Orders and Financial Orders:

Clerk confirmed that she had checked the SALC website and there were not updates to the Standing Orders and Financial Orders for Smaller Authorities, but it is good practice to at least annually review these documents. Cllr Tasker proposed and Cllr Luck seconded that the Standing Orders and Financial Orders remain those used by the PC.

13. Councillor's Reports

Cllr Hanlon enquired whether it would be possible to get quotations for removal of the Cherry Tree on the Green. She had been monitoring it and it was dying off. Cllrs all agreed that it should be removed, and that quotations for the works should be obtained.

Cllr Hanlon enquired whether Spring bulbs could be planted – Cllrs agreed. Cllr Hanlon will obtain quotation for bulbs and both this matter and the matter concerning the Cherry Tree would be discussed at the next meeting.

14. Planning: (no new planning matters at the time of serving the Agenda)

Planning decisions:

Application DC/19/01682 – 2 Priory Cottages, The Street, CO10 9NF – Erection of a single storey extension and garage. **Planning permission has been granted.**

Appeal APP/03505/W/18/3210916 – The Six Bells, The Street, CO10 9NG – Application for 6 no. dwellings. **Applicants Appeal is dismissed (decision of Babergh Planning Department to refuse the application is upheld).**

Meeting closed: 8.50pm

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