

PRESTON ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Preston St Mary Parish Council**held at 7.30pm on 29 October 2019 in the Village Hall**

Present: Cllrs Tasker, Hanlon, and Martin. The Parish Clerk, Nicola Smith and the District and County Cllr Robert Lindsay. No members of the public present.

1. Appointment of Chairman (following the resignation of Cllr McGrory):

Following discussion, it was agreed that Cllr Martin would be Chair, but Cllrs indicated that they would be happy to take it in turn to Chair the meetings, particularly when Cllr Martin was not present at a meeting. Cllr Martin duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chairman.

2. Apologies:

- i. Cllr Luck gave his apologies to the meeting due to work commitments;
- ii. Cllrs consented to accept the apology.

3. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest:

- i. Disclosure of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests – none.
- ii. Declaration of gifts of hospitality – none.
- iii. Requests for dispensation for pecuniary interest – not applicable.

4. Minutes of Meeting

Cllr Hanlon proposed and Cllr Tasker seconded that the Minutes of the meeting on the 24 September 2019 were a true and accurate record. Cllr Martin duly signed and dated the Minutes.

5. Matters Arising:

Cllr Hanlon organised planting up of Spring bulbs and 3 x Trees on 20 October 2019. There was a good number of villagers that came along to help. Cllr Hanlon thanked all those that helped.

Cllr Tasker had obtained a quotation for some works to be carried out to make it safer to step up to where the post box is at Whelp Street. Quotation was in the total sum of £125 to include materials and labour. Cllr Martin proposed that the quotation be accepted and the works carried out. Cllr Tasker seconded. Motion carried. Cllr Tasker will arrange for the works to be carried out.

Potholes – the potholes outside of Rise Farm had been marked up but they are yet to be repaired. Clerk has also requested that SCC highways undertake a review of the potholes along Rookwood Lane.

Cllr Hanlon thanked District and County Cllr Robert Lindsay for his help in getting the new bridge and footpath sign organised.

Signed.....

Dated.....

6. District and County Cllrs, Mr Robert Lindsay's Report:

Cabinet reshuffle

The cabinet member for finance Richard Smith has quit his post after what was reportedly a row over raising the council tax (he wanted a freeze). This triggered a reshuffle. Gordon Jones has moved over to take Cllr Smith's role at finance. That in turn meant that Mary Evans has been moved to take Gordon Jones' role in charge of education. In turn Andrew Reid has been appointed cabinet member for Highways and transport in place of Mary Evans. Cllr Reid was chair of the pension committee.

School bus travel to be reviewed

Mary Evans in her new role in charge of children and young people, issued an apology over the way the change to the school travel policy had been handled and said it would be reviewed by the head of the county's fire service Nick Hardingham. It is not clear however, whether this is a review of the whole policy or just of the way it was implemented. You will recall there were hundreds of appeals – there is still a huge backlog – and many children left not knowing whether they had a bus to their school at the start of term last month. Our group joined Labour to support a motion which asked for the policy to be modified to ensure an end to "split villages" and to ensure siblings still got free bus to their siblings school. This was voted down by the administration.

Public buses

My one allowed question at full council was to the new cabinet member of highways Andrew Reid to ask if he could meet passenger groups for the three bus routes (including the 461/462 and 120) in my division under threat from subsidy withdrawal. He said that he would consider it.

Health visitors

Our political group has been approached by very concerned Suffolk health visitors who revealed that their numbers have been cut by 41 from 117 in the wake of a new in-house contract in the county which is £1m cheaper than the previous contract. Another of the change is that 3 of the 5 mandatory visits to parents of children are no longer done by a qualified health visitor. We proposed a motion asking them to change this policy and ensure all visits were done by the same health visitor. This was also rejected.

Boundary Commission to shake up county ward boundaries (divisions)

The Local Government Boundary Commission has said it is minded to cut the number of county councilors from 75 to 70. It is now moving to determining new boundaries, known as divisions. The review is expected to be completed by July 2020.

Babergh name change to South Suffolk

The extraordinary council meeting planned for the 22 October was cancelled at the request of Cabinet Leader John Ward. Councillor Ward, who has been the main driver behind the name change, decided to withdraw the motion for now. It was felt that it was unlikely to get the 2/3 majority that would be required.

Signed.....

Dated.....

By withdrawing the motion the idea can be kicked into the long grass and resurrected at a later date. Councillor Ward is still keen on the idea and feels that the name change would be beneficial for the district, bringing it into line with the other districts in Suffolk. Cllr Ward said: "We have received valuable feedback both for and against the proposals over recent weeks that will help in our future discussions and we are extremely grateful for the free publicity we have received in the meantime, both nationally and internationally, that has helped people understand exactly where Babergh is located, and how to pronounce it!"

Paperless council

The environment task force that was set up after the July Climate Emergency motion has now sat for the first time. The first decision that has been made was to ensure we are digital first. Senior staff and councillors are being challenged to go paperless for council and committee papers. Distributing hard copies of these papers costs more than £50,000 a year.

Having a digital first approach is an expectation that will also be an ask for all staff in their day to day roles and the council will continue to encourage residents to self-serve via the 24/7 resources available online. Our public council and committee meetings provide a great platform to set an example about how we work in a digital way.

The task force is a joint committee between Babergh and Mid Suffolk and is due to sit monthly until March.

Parking Motion

During last Tuesday's council meeting a motion was put to ask the council to review parking in the district and seek additional capacity to meet housing growth planned for the area. I amended this to "review the level" of parking so that it was neutral about any assumption over whether increasing parking is the right way to go. There are strong arguments that increasing parking merely encourages more people to drive.

Before increasing parking and ultimately the cars on the road we should be looking at what options are available to provide residents with a serious alternative to driving. This will include public transport and cycling, particularly for residents of the towns, who may not need to drive every time. This amendment received the support of the council including the majority of the Conservatives and so will go to cabinet for consideration.

Free swimming – Hadleigh, Sudbury & Stowmarket

Both councils extended their free swims offer during the October half term and plan to do this again during the Christmas holidays 20 December to 5 January. This follows a successful summer take up, which saw thousands of under 17s take part, equating to more than 14,000 swims across the two districts.

- Kingfisher Leisure Centre, Sudbury
- Hadleigh Pool and Leisure
- Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, Stowmarket
- Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre

Signed.....

Dated.....

New users in Babergh will need to sign up for an Abbeycroft Leisure Free Swimming Membership in order to claim their free swim.

7. **Public Forum:** No members of the public present.
8. **Correspondence:** (general correspondence has been circulated to Cllrs)
9. **Clerk's report:**
- i. to consider schedule of items approved and awaiting authorisation;

Top Marques (PPP printing)	chq622	142.56	LGA 1972
Catherine Hanlon (reimburse trees)	chq623	158.51	LGA 1972

All Cllrs present approved the expenditure.

10. **Further consideration and approval of Precept for 2020/21:**

Cllrs approved the 2020/21 Precept in the sum of £5669. Clerk will have precept paperwork from Babergh (due in November/December) and will complete at the January 2020 meeting for submission to Babergh.

11. **Parish Councillor's Reports (if any)**

Firstly, Cllr Tasker thanked Cllr Hanlon on behalf of the Parish Council, for organising the bulb planting in the village on the 20th October 2019.

Cllr Hanlon reported that the SCC Tree Wardens were preparing a short presentation about Ash die back, and that once she hoped to be able to bring that presentation to the Parish Council in due course.

Chairman, Cllr Martin requested that the PC purchase Land Registry documents in relation to Mead House to establish who owns the land that the fence has been erected on. Cllr Tasker agreed. Clerk will look into obtaining the document and report back at next meeting.

12. **Planning Matter:** no new planning matter.

Meeting closed: 8.35pm

Next meeting: 28th January 2020 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Signed.....

Dated.....