

PRESTON ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

**Minutes of An Annual Parish Council Meeting of Preston St Mary Parish Council
held at 7.30pm on 26 May 2020 by way of video conferencing in order
to comply with the Coronavirus Act 2020 and current UK Government regulations
at this time during the Coronavirus pandemic.**

Present: Cllrs Richard Martin, Kate Hanlon, Alan Luck and Peter Korwin, together with the Parish Clerk Nicola Smith, and Kay Shorter.

- 1. To receive nominations for the position of Chair and Vice Chair; Cllr Martin indicated that he would be prepared to be Chairman. Cllr Hanlon proposed and Cllr Luck seconded. No nominations for Vice Chairman.**
- 2. Signing of Acceptance of Office Forms; Clerk will post the form to Cllr Martin.**
- 3. Apologies:**
 - i. Cllr Tasker sent his apologies. He does not currently have a laptop etc that enables him to join a 'remote. Meeting but he is aiming to rectify this soon.
 - ii. Cllr's all consent to Cllr Tasker's apology.
- 4. 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.
- 5. Minutes of Meeting**
To consider and approve the Annual Parish Assembly Minutes dated 23 April 2019, and the Minutes of the meeting on 28 January 2020.
23 April 2019: Propose:Cllr Hanlon Second: Cllr Luck
28 January 2020 Propose: Cllr Hanlon Second: Cllr Martin
- 6. Matters Arising:**

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| Appointment of new Parish Clerk | Mrs Kay Shorter, who resides in the village, has agreed to become the new Parish Clerk if Cllrs were to approve her appointment. | Cllrs to approve the appointment of Mrs Shorter at the meeting on 26 May 2020. Current Clerk to draft Employment Contract. |
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| | | <p>Due to Coronavirus the original timetable for handover would have been May/June 2020, but now aiming for August/September but in the meantime, current Clerk is providing information to Mrs Shorter to start the handover process.</p> |
| <p>Fence adjacent to Busted Mead and Mead House</p> | <p>At the meeting on 28 January 2020 Cllrs enquired further in relation to this matter and the response that had been received previously from Suffolk County Council when they indicated that on their investigations there had been “overwhelming” documentation which supports Mead House being able to place the fence where they have, and a such SCC legal department had decided not pursue the matter.</p> <p>Parish Cllrs would like Clerk to make enquiries with SCC with regards to what the “overwhelming” evidence is.</p> | <p>Clerk corresponded with Mark Stevens, Assistant Director Operational Highways at Suffolk County Council.</p> <p>Response as follows:-</p> <p>“I am not able to share the full complaint response with you (as some of it does not directly deal with the land ownership issue) but I believe that the following extracts from such correspondence set out sufficient explanation.</p> <p><i>Firstly, legal opinion: The 1886 Ordnance Survey shows the area of what is now Mead House and Busted mead then forming part of what appears to be enclosure 153. Until at least the 1960s there was an open ditch running along what is now the verge enclosed by the fence, evidenced by West Suffolk County Council on 23 October 1963 in document 8/63/655/C. There is a general presumption that where a</i></p> |

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| | | <p><i>hedge lies adjacent to a ditch, the boundary is the furthest side of the ditch from the hedge, so that the hedge and ditch fall within the same title (see Alan and Wibberley Building Ltd -v- Insley [1999] 1 WLR 894 and Land Registry practice Guide, Supplement 3, para 11.2)</i></p> <p><i>That legal Opinion is the most significant element. However, pertinent extracts from my investigations include: From conversations with the likes of Mr Pryke and enquiries to the team that maintain highway grass verges on behalf of Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils, the grass strip appears to have been maintained by the residents rather than any public body. So, whilst it has not previously been enclosed but remained open to public use, I am not of the opinion that it has become a public right of way by default.</i></p> <p><i>And</i></p> <p><i>I can find no evidence that any steps have been taken to address other obstructions elsewhere along the grass strip – but, equally, the County Council has not had to respond to any local community challenges to that effect.”</i></p> |
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| | | <p><i>The West Suffolk County Council document dated 23 October 1963 and also the Land Registry register of local charges (Office Copy Entries and Plan) were provided with the response.</i></p> <p>Cllr Martin asked if Clerk could resend to him the documents referred to in the response as the copy he had received in the email was not easy to read (it is a copy of an old document which has yellowed over time).</p> |
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7. District and County Cllrs, Mr Robert Lindsay’s Report (Cllr Lindsay conveyed his apologies as he was at another remote meeting which was at the same time):

Bildeston Foodbank expands to neighbouring villages

This group (which emerged from the village community group helping shop for those isolating or shielded) is keen to work with villages such as Preston to reach anyone in need on the village. They have recently obtained a £2000 grant from Babergh. I also put them in touch with a supply of PPE from Suffolk County Council. I’m told the foodbank is having about three requests for help a week just from within Bildeston. I personally have reason to appreciate the work of the delivery volunteers.

Virtual SCC Meetings

SCC has cancelled its last two full council meetings. It will be holding cabinet meetings and next full council meeting virtually in July. If they are public meetings, they can still be attended by members of the public. The link to the virtual meeting will be included on the agenda for the meeting.

Babergh virtual meetings

Babergh is following same procedures as the county. More planning applications will be determined by delegated authority unless controversial enough to make committee. The first online planning committee has already taken place. There are regular online meetings with chief executive and leaders of the political groups to keep up to speed.

Cifco – Council business investing in commercial property

This has been badly hit by the crisis with rents way below what they should be as tenants plead for rent forgiveness. The income for the March quarter was 70% of what it ought to

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be but the next quarter is expected to be lower. They have to fall to 31% before Babergh has to dig into its own reserves to pay the interest rates on Cifco's loans. I have been suggesting that we scrap the deal to build a Premier Inn in Sudbury given the borrowing required and the financial insecurity of the tenant. The FT reports that the Govt is demanding councils cease investing in commercial property.

Business grants

I have passed you the details of a couple of businesses in Preston that are yet to claim their business grant entitlement. The form they need to complete is here

<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/business/business-rates/grant-funding-schemes/>

Supply of PPE

Suffolk County Council are supplying emergency PPE to all primary care providers who are unable or struggling to source their own supplies.

More information on who is eligible to order PPE, and how to make an order, is available at:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/suffolks-response/personal-protective-equipment-for-frontline-workers/>

Questions about ordering PPE should be sent to PPE@suffolk.gov.uk

Funding from Government

Suffolk County Council has received £34.7m from the government to help with the council's coronavirus response.

However, the Council is currently forecasting that the financial impact of the crisis will be at least £56m (due to both extra expenditure and lost income) by the end of march 2021, and so more support from the government will be needed. Babergh has received an extra £914,000. Although this is welcome it is not enough to cover their forecast hit.

Traffic calming measures to protect walkers/cyclists exercising outdoors

The transport minister announced on May 11 that he was providing £250m emergency funding to local highways authorities to implement measures such as road closures, pop up bike lanes and 20 mph limits during lockdown. This was to ensure there is room for 2m spacing as shops reopen post June 1st. Before this announcement I had already been encouraging Highways to take these sort of measures to allow residents to safely get their daily exercise and maintain social distancing.

The county council Highways are currently looking at various measures though they have yet to communicate with town and parish councils.

Cost of post-16 Home to School transport increases by £90

The cost of mainstream post-16 school transport has been increased by £90, whilst the cost of post-16 transport for SEND students has increased by £30. This is despite the fact that a consultation on the proposed increase indicated that 75% of parents who responded felt that the increase would have an impact on them.

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Increase in social worker pay

Suffolk County Council has agreed to increase the pay of children’s social workers to match the remuneration offered by neighbouring councils, in order to attract and retain skilled social workers in Suffolk. It is estimated that the pay increase will cost £1.4m and will be funded from council reserves. I am pleased that the council has taken this step, because by group proposed this exact policy as part of our budget amendment in February.

8. **Public Forum:** No members of the public present.

9. **Correspondence:** (general correspondence has been circulated to Cllrs)

(i) Email dated 19 May 2020 from Definitive Maps Officer regarding claimed restrictive byway at Brent Eleigh/Preston St Mary. *Following discussion it was considered that the Ramblers Association were probably making this application now to open up the historic byway before the national 2026 deadline when it would become significantly more difficult/impossible to do so. Some concern that it may eventually lead to this becoming a RUPP. Clerk will make enquiries with with relevant Officer and revert back to the PC.*

10. **Clerk’s report:**

i. Schedule since meeting on 28 January 2020;

Income

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Precept (1 of 2 payments) | 2834.50 |
|---------------------------|---------|

Expenditure

| | | | |
|---|--------|--------|-----------|
| EON (annual electric bill for phonebox) | chq629 | 40.70 | LGA 1972 |
| Suffolk.cloud (annual webhosting) | chq630 | 100.00 | LGA 1972 |
| SALC (annual subscription fee) | chq631 | 127.94 | LGA 1972 |
| Top Marques (PPP printing) | chq632 | 105.60 | LGA 1972 |
| N Smith (salary) | chq633 | 386.40 | LGA 1972 |
| HMRC (tax and NI) | chq634 | 51.60 | Taxes&Inc |

ii. Audit update. Coronavirus has meant some delays in receiving instructions from the External Auditors regarding completion of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Clerk will aim to complete the AGAR by the end of July. It was agreed that the Clerk would arrange an additional remote meeting for 28 July 2020 at 7.30pm in order for the Cllrs to consider and approve the AGAR.

11. **Review of Standing Orders and Financial Orders:** Cllrs had all received the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations ahead of the meeting. Clerk had inserted wording with regards to Coronavirus and new legislation permitting the Parish Council to hold meetings remotely at the present time. All Cllrs present approved the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

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12. Parish Councillor's Reports (if any):

Cllr Hanlon expressed her thanks to G Pryke for mowing the area of the Village Green opposite his home.

Cllr Hanlon would also like to thank Honor and Merle for watering the new trees that had been planted on the green. This is much appreciate but particularly during the current long spell of dry weather.

Cllr Hanlon enquired whether the Parish Council would consider at its next meeting paying for some more Spring bulbs to add to the daffodils that were planted last year. Cllrs present all agreed that they would agree to purchase of more bulbs and that it could be discussed further at the next scheduled meeting.

13. Planning Matter: no new planning matters.

Date of next meeting: 28 July 2020 at 7.30pm by way of video conferencing.

Meeting closed: 8pm

Signed.....

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