

PRESTON ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Preston St Mary Parish Council**held at 7.30pm on 28 January 2020 in the Village Hall**

Present: Cllrs Tasker, Hanlon, Luck and Martin, together with the Parish Clerk, Nicola Smith. No members of the public present.

Cllr Luck Chaired the meeting.

1. Apologies:

- i. All Parish Cllrs present;
- ii. No consent required as all Parish Cllrs present.

2. 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.

3. Minutes of Meeting

Small amendment to Minutes of 29 October 2019, to reflect that Cllrs would take it in turns to Chair meetings, but thereafter all Cllrs present agreed that the Minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. Matters Arising:

Fence outside of Mead House and Busted Mead – Clerk again discussed with Cllrs the email dated 28 January 2019 from Mark Stevens, Assistant Director Operational Highways. Cllrs not happy that there is no mention of what the “substantive documentation that overwhelming suggested that the fence is erected on the highway boundary” is. Discussion followed. Clerk no longer had a Land Registry account and as such if Cllrs still wanted obtain Land Registry documentation then one of the Cllrs would obtain them and be reimbursed by the Parish Council. Cllrs agreed that they still wanted to obtain the LR documentation.

5. District and County Cllrs, Mr Robert Lindsay's Report: (Cllr Lindsay was unable to attend the meeting due to ill health but had sent his report as follows)**County Council****Budget 2020-21**

Council precept to rise by 4% (2% general and 2% social care)

This leaves slight surplus for “investment” of £3.5m – available this year only.

£3.0m – Suffolk 2020 Fend – Investment available for projects related to carbon reduction, carbon offset, road safety, natural environment, built environment, innovation and use of technology. Must have a cabinet member sponsor.

Signed.....

Dated.....

£0.5m – Highways Investment Fund – improving road sign and marking visibility. Refreshing road markings along main routes through villages and those supporting sustainable transport options such as cycling in urban area. Minor repairs and resetting of twisted signs.

Citizens Advice – another stay if grace

Rather than remove the Citizen's Advice grant (currently £0.184m) entirely in 2020-21, as last planned, the Council has committed to provide £0.12m each year for the next three years. Citizen's Advice will also receive a second year of funding from the CCGs, which equates to an additional £0.184 for 2020-21.

First new SEND units announced

In January 2019, Suffolk County Council agreed to provide an additional £45.1m to fund additional school and specialist units for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

The first 10 specialist units, providing 168 spaces, are due to open in September 2020.

Roadworks – move to a permit system

Highways are proposing to move from April 1st to a system by which utilities must apply to the county for a permit to do roadworks, rather than give notice for roadworks as is currently the case. The main difference is that SCC will be able to charge utilities for the permit and therefore will be able to use the revenue to recruit more staff (16 on top of the 19 already employed by Network Assurance) to better monitor roadworks; ensure they are done in a timely fashion and more easily levy fines when the roadworks over run.

Babergh District Council

Civil Parking Enforcement

Civil parking enforcement is expected to be handed to district councils in Suffolk from 31 January 2020. Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) is already responsible for on-road parking enforcement, however across the rest of the county it is the police who are responsible.

Under the new plans, IBC and West Suffolk Council will also cover the Mid-Suffolk and Babergh area on an agreed operational split: WSC will operate in the northern two thirds of Mid Suffolk and the western half of Babergh, and IBC will operate in the remaining areas.

Babergh budget

Council tax is proposed to rise by £5 (equivalent to just over 3%) next year, the maximum allowed. The empty property discount is being changed so that it only applies for 28 days rather than three months. Long stay care parking charges at Sudbury and Hadleigh are increasing from £2 to £3. Short stay remains free for now.

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Council houses

After four years of reductions, the council is also proposing putting up council house rents by 2.7% meaning a £2.19 per week increase for tenants – although, even with this increase, rents are still lower than in 2015/16. Sheltered housing tenants also face an increase of £2 a week on their bills, but their utility payments remain static for another year.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for council houses is looking healthy with a strategic reserve of £12.7m. This should allow the council to step up its building of new council homes significantly.

The HRA Capital programme includes significant investment in new build and acquisition properties - £26.9m up to 2023/24 – as well as £24.3 proposed spend on maintenance and improvement of existing homes to 2023/24.

New Homes Bonus phased out

The Government has said that New Homes Bonus payments (money paid for each house built in Babergh) will be phased out from the year after next (2021/22) dropping to zero by 2023/24. This will leave Babergh solely dependent on council tax and business rates for income. The Government has said it is looking at replacing NHB with another fund linked to housing growth, but it has given no details. For the coming financial year Babergh will receive just over £1m in NHB of which half is being used to balance the budget and the other half will go to the “transformation fund” for investment projects.

Planning Enforcement

The planning enforcement team are currently reviewing their procedures to try to provide quicker responses and a more effective service. However, they warn that during the review, expected to last to end of March, they will take longer than usual to respond. They urge that people use the “report it” online form for complaints of planning breaches, which will allow them to create a case without delay.

6. Co-option:

Mr Peter Korwin had come forward to be co-opted on to the Parish Council. He has previous experience of being a Parish Councillor in other parishes where he had resided before moving to Preston St Mary. All Cllrs agreed to the co-option. Cllr Korwin then signed the Declaration of Office and Clerk provided a Register of Interest form for completion and return to her within 28 days.

7. Public Forum: No members of the public present.

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

9. Clerk’s report:

- i. to confirm resignation of Clerk/RFO from the Parish Council. Clerk will stay up to and including the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May 2020, unless a replacement is found sooner. Clerk has arranged for an advertisement to go into the next edition of the PPP, notices to go on the notice boards in the village, and will also advertise

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on the Suffolk Association of Local Councils website (free of charge). Update at next meeting.

- ii. Cllrs agreed the following Schedule of Payments:

Since last meeting on 29 October 2019 a cheque numbered 624 made payable to "Suffolk Property Services" (Mr Peter Rout) was drafted and sent to Cllr Tasker to gain signatures to and then pass on to Mr Rout. Cllr Tasker was unable to do this due to various reasons and instead paid Mr Rout directly. Cllr Tasker returned cheque numbered 624 to Clerk. Please see cheque numbered 626 below which reimburses Cllr Tasker for the payment in the sum of £125 paid to Mr Rout for the work carried out on the triangle of land near Whelp Street, leading up to the post box.

SCHEDULE OF ITEMS AWAITING APPROVAL

J Dunk	reimburse compost/tree ties (new trees on Green)	15.96	chq625 Open Spaces Act
L J Tasker	reimburse payment to Mr P Rout (see above)	125.00	chq626 LGA 1972
Top Marques	PPP printing	142.56	chq627 LGA 1972
N Smith	Clerks salary*	657.00	chq628 LGA 1972

*Clerks salary for period: 25 September 2019 to 28 January 2020. 18 weeks less 3 weeks (15 weeks charged instead of 18 weeks) that unable to work over December/January due to family commitments that arose.

10. Precept for 2020/21:

Cllrs approved the 2020/21 Precept in the sum of £5669. Cllr Luck presided at Chair at the meeting and duly signed the Babergh precept document, along with Cllr Martin and Tasker and the Clerk countersigned the document. Clerk will submit to BDC.

11. Parish Councillor's Reports (if any)

None

12. Planning Matter:

- (i) Application DC/20/00031 – 3 Priory Cottages, The Street, Preston St Mary – householder planning application – erection of detached garage (following demolition of existing). **No objections.**

13. Date of next meeting: 24 March 2020 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Meeting closed: 8.15pm

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