PRESTON ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of Preston St Mary Parish Council.**

**held on 28th September 2021 In the conservatory of the Six Bells**

**Present:** Cllr Tasker, Cllr Hanlon, Cllr Whymark together with Cllr Robert Lindsay and the Parish Clerk, Kay Shorter. No members of public present.

1. **Apologies:**
2. Chair Cllr Martin sent his apologies he is receiving a course of chemotherapy
3. Cllr Korwin sent apologies as he is away

Cllr Tasker proposed Cllr Hanlon chair this meeting, Cllr Whymark seconded. Cllr Hanlon accepted apologies

1. **To receive Members’ Declarations of Interest:**
2. Disclosures of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest for the Agenda under discussion – none;
3. Declaration of gifts of hospitality – none;
4. Requests for dispensation for pecuniary interest – not applicable.
5. **Minutes of meeting**
6. minutes to be approved and signed from previous meeting at clerks house 29/09/21
7. **Robert Lindsay’s report**

**Council apologises after SEND report finds big failings**

The county council’s leadership has apologised to families after an independent report into the county’s care of special needs children (SEND) has come up with a lengthy list of serious failings.

The report found that the education service had been poor at communicating with parents, was slow to respond to calls and emails, had placed some pupils in inappropriate schools, had failed to identify caseworkers for children, failed to record requests from parents, failed to routinely track the Care Plans for children and had faced high numbers of appeals when they had refused to provide assessments.

The authors – a team from Lincolnshire County Council made a series of recommendations which the council has agreed. These include hiring specialist consultants (Impower) to help review all their case work and ensure that better health and care plans for children are drawn up. Also to ensure that they share information with health service colleagues.

**Climate Emergency**

The county council agreed a little noticed plan to achieve zero carbon for Suffolk (not just the councils but the whole of Suffolk), in June.

It sets out broad goals for change in behaviours and technology to achieve zero carbon by 2030 by means of measures of: ‘transitioning to a fully decarbonised heat supply for homes; improving energy efficiency; behavioural change to use less energy; low carbon travel; reducing car use; more efficient freight transport; reductions in commercial and industrial carbon use; improvements in renewable energy production and a flexible grid’ among others.

**Cycling and walking motion**

The Conservative administration said in its election literature this spring that it had identified £20m of cycle path upgrades. In line with this I, with the backing of my political group, proposed a motion at the September Council Meeting that the Council set specific benchmarks and targets each year to spend the £20m up to 2030 in order to double cycling and walking by then.  Unfortunately the administration voted this motion down and admitted that what they meant was that they had identified cycle routes for prioritising and calculated the cost as £20m but there was no commitment to spend any of it over any timescale.

**Suffolk Biodiversity policy development panel**

I am on this panel and have attended the first 3 of 8 meetings. I will try to ensure that goals and a strict timeframe are set so that progress can be checked. So far summary of recommendations seem a little vague.

We have discussed so far a different regime for verge management as well as moving towards a phase out of the use of glyphosate on pavements in Suffolk towns. Also working with landowners and our own county farms to “rewild” significant proportions.

**Road closures and signage**

At full council earlier in September one of my group colleagues asked what the council was doing about “sloppy signage” when roads are closed with a report to council showing there were 20% of closures where the signage had not been up to standard. Cabinet member Paul West stressed that it was the sloppy behaviour of the utility companies (rather than Highways Network Assurance) and said he was making efforts to improve this behaviour. Though he gave no details about how. He said that last year there 65,000 applications for closure – over 200 a day – and that because of the volume highways can only do a “sample” of them to check that signage was being done correctly.

**Gas fired power station, Sudbury**

A recent planning application for a Gas Fired power station in Sudbury was rejected narrowly by planning committee partly on climate change grounds, despite the officer recommending approval. I spoke against the application. It is likely the applicant will go to appeal.

**Babergh agrees to look at ending cabinet system**

Babergh full council meeting on 21 Sept unanimously agreed to investigate changing from a cabinet system to a committee system. This was the result of a motion I had proposed. The cabinet system tends to exclude all councillors from decision making bar the 7 or 8 that are in the cabinet. The committee system guarantees that all councillors have a say. A cross party working group will report back with options for a committee system or a modified cabinet system for the council to vote on in the new year.

**Pay-rises of c25% for top execs at Babergh rejected**

Full council also rejected, by 17 votes to 8, a proposal to increase pay for chief executive, strategic director and the 8 assistant directors. The argument in a report from the East of England LGA was that directors pay had not been reviewed since 2011 (although they have received incremental pay increases in line with other staff) and that it had dropped below average for similar councils and that therefore retention would be more difficult. Councillors against this (including myself) argued that the pay of all staff needed to be reviewed together. Bumping up the top brass’s pay on this scale and not the lower paid staff at a time of hardship for many Babergh residents was likely to hit morale.  

**Considerate constructor, LED lights**Full council also approved a Green motion on signing up to the considerate constructor scheme and a joint Green - Conservative motion on moving towards adjustable LED lights of different colours from white to avoid affecting wildlife.   

1. **Public Forum**  no members of the public were present
2. **Correspondence**
3. Quote for defib from British Heart Foundation has been received, which is much lower than the price on the one Bob Hutchinson quoted for.
4. Letter from Eon energy to say price will change as of 01/09/21
5. Email from CAS to say they can no longer provide insurance, 2 new quotes have been received 1 from Zurich at a cost of £311.80 and Came and Company at a cost of £218.00, Cllr Tasker proposed the policy with Came and Company Cllr Hanlon seconded.
6. **Clerk’s Report:**
7. Clerk requested Cllr Whymark to audit the previous quarters accounts
8. Clerk reported the grant form had been sent to Babergh council but no response to this or the email sent to chase it up, Cllr Lindsay confirmed he had been chasing as well, maybe best course of action was to send electronically as council staff are still working from home. Clerk confirmed the new cost of the defib and Cllr Lindsay said he will make a contribution towards this as well as the grant from Babergh
9. Clerk confirmed payments that have been made since last meeting 09/07/21 £100.00 to Suffolk Cloud for web hosting 09/07/21 £583.44 clerk’s salary 09/07/21 £211.20 Top Marques for printing April/May edition and June/ July edition 27/09/21 £800.00 grant to the parochial council for the upkeep of grounds around the church 27/09/21 £800.00 grant to the village hall 27/09/21 £40.00 to the ICO for data protection (legally required) 27/09/21 £105.60 to Top Marques for Parish Paper Printing August/Sept edition
10. **Councilors reports**
11. Cllr Hanlon feels the issue with the village green needs addressing again, although it was decided to allow the green to grow into a small flower meadow area, the grass has been cut again. She feels we need to compose a letter to the immediate neighbours to say that the intention is to keep this area unmown and allow flowers and grasses for the bees. Clerk to write a letter regarding this to be agreed on at next meeting.
12. The matter of advertising costs for the parish paper has been raised, council need to agree as to who pays and who is exempt. Also the cost of advertising needs to be reviewed as currently the cost is more for a page than it is for 3 x 1/3, which makes no sense. Kay to contact editors to see if a way forward can be agreed
13. Cllr Hanlon raised the subject of a few vehicles speeding through the village, council don’t feel there is enough of a problem to look into further traffic calming measures.
14. Cllr Hanlon is going to report the footpath sign opposite Council House Number 1 again to the council, it is currently laying on the ground
15. **Planning**
16. No planning matters this meeting

**Next meeting** 26th October (again to be held in the conservatory of the Six Bells)

Meeting closed at 20.58 hrs