

PRESTON ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Preston St Mary Parish Council.

held on 30 March 2021 via zoom

Present: Chair Cllr Martin, Cllr Tasker, Cllr Korwin, Cllr Hanlon, Robert Lindsay together with the Parish Clerk, Kay Shorter. 1 member of public present.

1. Apologies:

- i. Alan Luck sent his apologies he was unable to attend due to work commitments. Chair accepted the apology

2. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest:

- i. Disclosures of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest for the Agenda under discussion – none;
- ii. Declaration of gifts of hospitality – none;
- iii. Requests for dispensation for pecuniary interest – not applicable.

3. Robert Lindsay's report

Suffolk County Council Budget

The Suffolk County Council Budget was voted through Full Council on February 11th. Key points include:

- A council tax rise of 4% (2% basic council tax and 2% Social Care Precept), representing an increase of £53.55 for a Band D property.
- Planned spending is £597.9m, 7.4% more than 2020-21.
- £15.3m of spending to address ongoing COVID-19 costs.
- No proposed reductions in council services or personnel.

Green Budget Amendment voted down

My political group submitted an amendment to the administration's budget. This would have authorised the use of the full 3% social care precept to avoid impacting SCC's reserves and generate an extra £3.45m at a cost of only £13.41 per year to a Band D household. The extra income would have provided funding for wider services, including a new officer for the flooding team to unlock more government funding, and the re-enablement of concessionary bus passes on community transport. The amendment was not passed.

Up to 10 year delay to flood repairs

It has emerged from a report to the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny subcommittee on 3rd March, that funding restrictions meant it would take highways ten years to repair all the highways flooding issues currently on its list.

Meanwhile, the County Council has been told it will receive £27m from Government for highways repairs, maintenance and drainage in 2021-22, a reduction from £31m the previous year. This has necessitated the use of £2m of reserves to top up the grant.

Suffolk moves school bus contracts from Norse to Vertas

The county's school buses have been run since 2013 by Suffolk Norse, a joint venture in which Suffolk has a 20% stake. However, Suffolk Norse went into losses in the last two years and has handed notice in on the contract. Suffolk cabinet decided on 23 February to move the contract in-house by handing it to its wholly owned company Vertas.



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The 40 home-to-school transport routes and a school swimming service will be delivered by Vertas from September onwards. The move does mean the county can look at replacing diesel with electric vehicles as the technology becomes viable, to help meet its zero carbon by 2030 commitment.

Babergh budget approved, Green amendment voted down

On Feb 23rd the council voted for its budget. Council tax will rise by 3%, the equivalent of less than 10p a week (£5 a year) for an average Band D property. The increase funds a package of measures that the council feel will meet the medium-term financial challenges presented by the pandemic; help meet its ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030; and maintain services for residents and communities.

I seconded my colleague Leigh Jamieson's amendment to the budget which tried to allow extra staff and funding for planning, increase planning committee training and to encourage community projects. We were also looking to initiate further green measures to protect biodiversity and kickstart climate change improvements. We also proposed that the council set aside £2m from its "transformation reserve" for retrofitting its council homes. All amendments were voted down.

Babergh Council leader keeps his job after winning no confidence vote by 20 votes to 10

At the February Council meeting a motion of no confidence was submitted by councillors representing Sudbury calling for John Ward to resign as leader. John Ward has led on the proposed Babergh name change, the closure of Babergh's customer access point in Sudbury, the failed sale of Belle Vue to Premier Inn and the instigation of Car Park charges. The cabinet system Babergh introduced in 2017 means he can do this without any consultation with the public or Councillors.

Number plate recognition cameras to catch speeders

The county council has just announced this scheme which will involve them buying ten number plate recognition cameras and installing them in villages where there is a speeding issue for up to a week at a time. Spots will be "identified by parish councils, with support from county councillors, where there are known issues with speeding or rat running in a 20mph or 30mph zone."

4. **Public Forum** one member of the public joined the meeting but did not wish to speak.

5. **Clerk's Report:** Clerk confirmed tree stump near telephone box has been ground down. Clerk has spoken to member of public regarding the purchase and installation of defibrillator. Need to discuss funding; Robert Lindsey says council cannot offer a grant before the elections in May. Need to elect councilor to check accounts on quarterly basis. Clerk reported that no payment for hire of village hall was made in the year 2019-2020. This will be rectified along with outstanding grants from last year for both village hall and parochial council.
4. **Councillors reports** Councillors decided that we need a proactive project to reinstate hedgerows that have disappeared over the years. All councillors agreed that this would be best suited to the autumn and we should apply for the free hedging when it becomes available from the Woodland Trust. It was agreed that bark chippings will be put around the base of the trees on the green. The wooden Preston St Mary sign is to be cleaned.
5. **Planning** Councillors have looked at the plans no DC/21/01654, no objections, clerk to make comment regarding hedges to the rear of the site.
6. **Next meeting** as covid restrictions will allow a face to face meeting after the 17th May it was proposed that the meeting that would have been held on April 27th, which is the Annual Parish Meeting should be held face to face after the AGM on 18th May. The AGM is to be held at 7.00 on 18th May followed by the Annual Parish meeting at 7.30. Clerk to see if hall is available and send message to all clubs and societies that would normally attend.

Meeting closed at 20.41 hrs

