

***Priors Marston Parish Council Meeting
Tuesday 25th March 2025 at 7.30pm
At The Priors Hall***

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Cllr. Laura Lucas, Cllr. Pete Dunkley, Cllr. Robyn May,
Cllr. John Franklin, County Cllr Chris Kettle, District Cllr. Nigel Rock

In Attendance: Emma Hooker (Clerk/RFO) 5 Members of the PCC

Meeting opened at 7.35pm

- 1. Apologies:** Cllr. Sarah Mills
- 2. Declarations of Interest:** None
- 3. Approval of the minutes of the last meeting held on 14th January 2025**
Minutes approved by all present at the meeting as a true record and signed by Chair.
- 4. Outstanding Actions & Matters Arising**

- **Playground Project**

Update from Clerk on the playground project was given to all present.

The Clerk has put out a call within the school and local community for a couple of parents to join the working party to have an input in the future of the playground.

The consultation questionnaire to date has had 55 responses and will remain open for the time being.

Sarah and the Clerk have met with Cllrs and Clerks from Bishops Itchington and Fenny Compton who have recently had new playgrounds using some of the preferred suppliers.

There will be a future tender request for the suppliers due to the amount money required for the project and funding is being researched as well.

- **Right of Way footpath maintenance**

Clerk is awaiting further update regarding the outstanding 2 right of way issues reported to WCC. Clerk will chase with Cllr Kettle.

- **Village Design Statement**

Cllr Franklin will discuss with SDC and report back at the next meeting.

- **War Memorial Maintenance**

The War Memorial needs a clean and some maintenance. Clerk is liaising with Chair of Priors Hardwick to possibly get someone to do both memorials. Due to the nature of the memorials, and stone this should be done by a professional company with experience and insurance.

Clerk has so far received 1 quote and is awaiting a further 2 and will report back to the PC and Hardwick once received.

5. PCC (St Leonard Church) Request for Grant

Representatives of the PCC were in attendance and were invited to discuss their request to the PC. Due to increased financial pressure, they would like financial support from the Parish to help with the upkeep of the graveyard maintenance (mowing and Strimming etc)

The Parish Council asked for detailed accounts being held by the PCC, request for what fundraising the PCC have tried to raise more money along with an idea of support required and for what (with quotes)

1. The PCC accounts were not available however an expenditure and income statement were provided.
2. Fund raising to maintain the churchyard – The cost of regular mowing and strimming in 2024 was £4,105 which exceeded the income from the CBF interest received by the sum of £1,481.43. The PCC stated they do not have the capacity to fund raise for the churchyard as well as the much bigger task of raising money for major repairs to the church building.
3. At present the most pressing issue for the PCC is the funding of the regular mowing and strimming which is scheduled to resume from 1st April 2025 onwards. The funding for maintaining the churchyard to date has come from the reserve built up by the PCC over several years which was depleted by, amongst other things, the significant tree work carried out in 2024 for the safety of the village community. The amount of the grant would likely be £1000/1500 per annum for this year and could possibly be requested again the following year.

The PCC can request grant monies from Parish Councils and must be done in an official format with correct forms being completed and submitted for approval. Clerk will investigate this and report back to the PCC.

7. Update District Cllr – Nigel Rock

Stratford-on-Avon District Councilors have set the District element of the Council Tax at a meeting of the Council on Monday 24 February. The amount residents will be asked to pay for a Band D property is £169.12, an increase of £5. This is an increase of 3.05%, which for an average home represents just an additional 42p per month to the District Council next year. **Stratford-on-Avon remains a low-taxing authority, 18th lowest out of 164 district councils across the country in 2024/25.**

Although the District Council acts as the collecting agent for Council Tax, it **only receives 7.1% of the Council Tax paid by residents.** Warwickshire County Council receives the lion's share of 76.6%, the Police 12.8% and Towns/Parishes 3.5%.

	2025/26	% Increase
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	£169.12	3.05%
Warwickshire County Council	£1,822.95	5.00%
Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner	£303.71	4.83%
Sub-total	£2,295.78	4.83%
Town and Parish Councils (District average)	£84.13	13.95%
TOTAL	£2,379.91	5.13%
Local Parish Council 'precepts' are:		
Fenny Compton	£51.89	-15.4%
Napton	£89.99	-3.6%
Priors Hardwick	£24.90	-5.0%
Priors Marston	£59.04	-1.4%
Southam	£137.41	18.0%

In addition, at the budget meeting, two items of particular interest to Parishes are the £250,000 for Parishes and Community groups to improve their community facilities and £50,000 for Trees for Parishes. As soon as we have further detail on how these funds may be applied for, we will of course, let you know.

Update on Local Government Reorganisation – 'Devolution White Paper'

Central government wrote to the District Council in early February to request that their initial proposals for the re-arrangement of local government in England are submitted to them by 21 March. At the time of writing, a further Extraordinary Full Council meeting is scheduled for Monday 17 March in order to meet this deadline. The agenda is available on the District Council's website with the webcast on the District Council's channel on YouTube.

South Warwickshire Local Plan

The consultation for the South Warwickshire Local Plan is now closed.

We have shared our own response as Ward Members with the Parish Councils in the ward which we hope is helpful. Residents are welcome to a copy - please do email us. The consultation covered a wide range of matters, but of most interest to many residents were the alternative proposals for housing and commercial sites. Once the sites in this consultation have been pared down, we understand that there will be a further public

consultation on those remaining, towards the end of the year and obviously we will let you know when that is taking place so that you can comment.

HS2

Nigel has attended many meetings with HS2, their contractors, MPs, officers and other councillors over recent weeks. There is likely to be continuing disruption by road closures and diversions over a wide area over coming months.

There continues to be a lack of clarity about timing of the closure of the roads between Priors Hardwick, Boddington and Wormleighton and to establishing a satisfactory plan to deal with this. So far Nigel has had at least five meetings on this subject and your local representatives have found we have a different viewpoint to HS2 and the contractors about who should be responsible to inconvenience to the public, and to the cost of the inevitable work and repairs to the road network that will result on these minor roads. We will continue to press for the best outcome we can.

The area around Kenilworth is to be affected by the closing of a section of the A46 from the Stivichall Interchange (Festival Island) to the Thickthorn Island (A452 for Leamington and Kenilworth) for 19 days from **Friday 11 April Thursday 1 May. There will be a network of diversions impacting roads in the area.**

Nigel has also been asking questions about the intentions for connecting the new bridges south of Southam when they are completed. These will affect the Banbury and Kineton roads. There are long diversion routes when and if these roads are closed (probably late autumn). We are trying to ensure when the existing roads are linked up there are minimum diversion periods.

8. Update – County Cllr Chris Kettle

The overall spend for the Council in 2025/26 is budgeted to be £414.8 million. This compares to a budget of £386.7 million in 2024/25. The largest element of the budget remains social care and support which is £250.2 million (24/25 £225.0 million) or 59%.

The Devolution Whitepaper

WCC has now heard back from the Minister that Warwickshire will not be considered in the first tranche of those counties being unitarized. That is being focused on ten Council areas in the south-east.

The Minister has responded requesting that WCC, and other Warwickshire local authorities, submit an interim plan on or before 21 March 2025 for unitarization, in line with guidance set out. His officials will provide feedback on the plan to help support the development of final proposals.

The Minister requires a full proposal to be submitted by **28 November**.

The Government has made it clear it is their intention that all two-tier authorities will disappear and will be replaced by single tier unitary authorities over the next three years. The minimum number of residents per authority, except in exceptional circumstances will be 500,000.

Southam Road

Funded from my delegated budget, proposals are now in place to improve signage on the Southam Road with road narrows signs to be installed. The proposals are with the road safety team and hopefully the signs should be in place in approximately 3 months.

Flooding

The jetting team has visited and jetted the drains in School Lane. The team has spoken to adjacent property owners to give advice about water backing up onto private land. Keys Lane drains have been reinspected and are found to be flowing correctly. Landowner's ditches may need some remedial work to be carried out.

The Flood Risk Management team have been busy particularly in Long Itchington and Fenny Compton seeking to resolve long term flooding issues.

Highways

The County Council road safety budget, along with other areas of expenditure, is limited and safety improvements are focused on those areas that have a history of accidents. Speed enforcement itself is not a County issue but is for Warwickshire Police to manage.

The Old Gated Road, Chesterton

Following public consultation, it is proposed to close the road to vehicular traffic adjacent to the new ST pumping station close to the M40 bridge. The format of the closure would enable pedestrians, equestrians and bicyclists to pass.

Chesterton Windmill

The plans for the replacement of the sails and blocks finally received planning permission in late January along with approval from Historic England and, work is commenced at the beginning of March and the new sails are now on.

Secondary School Offer Data

This year 96% of all Warwickshire residents will be offered one of their top three choices of secondary school, of which 82% were offered a place at their first preference school. 198 pupils were not offered a place at one of their first three preferences.

They have been made an offer at the school that is closest to their home address that has places left after all the on-time applications have been considered.

103 children have been allocated a place less than three miles from their home address, with the furthest distance (for a child from a rural area) placed 11 miles away.

SEND issues

Andy Crump and I have now met with senior officers at WCC to discuss the performance of certain schools, particularly in relation to children with EHCP and SEND issues and schools' exclusion policies.

This is now going to result in further reviews by officers.

Councillors continue to meet with HS2 on regular occasions to review ongoing works and the impact on communities. There remains a significant gulf, in certain areas, between the needs of residents and the impact of HS2 works on the highway networks.

HS2 has in certain circumstances agreed to vary works to reduce the impact on residents. Notably certain long-term closures do appear to be being scheduled to take less time than previously announced.

The closure of Stoneton Lane, and the signing and maintenance of appropriate diversions, is still a matter of contention between EKFB, Warwickshire County Council and Sir Jeremy Wright who may be considering referring the plans to the appropriate HS2 Minister.

I continue to challenge the lack of clarity and endlessly increasing timescale for the A423 road closures.

9. Planning Matters

New and Pending

24/01917/FUL – Haremeadow, Marston Doles – Proposed agricultural barn and temp workers dwelling – (19/09) Pending – PC - No Representation

24/02999/REM – Chestnut Bank, Shuckburgh Road – Demolition of existing buildings and one new self-build with detached garage 16/01 – Pending PC No Objection

24/03294/FUL – Agricultural land adj. The Meadows, Southam Rd – Siting of Mobile home for Ag. Worker – PC Object 25/02 Pending

25/00357/FUL – 6 Westfield barns – Single storey rear ext. Pending 27/03 PC No Objection

25/00639/TREE – Athlone Cottage – Fell 3 x leylandii – Pending 09/04 PC No Objection

25/00420/FUL – Daneby House, Keys Lane – Construction of 3 bay oak framed garage – Pending 10/04 – PC No Objection (with questions to be put to SDC regarding trees and position of garage)

Decisions

24/02470/LBC – Church Cottage Replacement of porch, windows and door – No Objection GRANTED 15/0124/02201/FUL – The Chestnuts, Byfield Rd – Retrospective 1.8 mtr fence WITHDRAWN

25/00089/TREE – Plum Tree Cottage several tree works – Granted 25/0224

2502587/FUL – Windy Hill –Erection of oaked frame annexe – WITHDRAWN

25/00427/TREE – Craig Cottage, School Lane – Trim branches unknown species – Granted – 24/03

25/00263/TREE – Chestnuts House, Byfield Rd – Repollard willow tree – Granted 24/03

10. Finance January / February 2025

Bank Balance as of 1st March 2025 £34,506.08

Receipts- £0.00

DD = £417.83

Ionos website £135.60 /£35.00

Yu Energy £85.58/ 90.65

ICO Data protection £35.00

Campaign to protect rural England £36.00

Payments £2623.89

Pete Brown Mowing £200.00 / £200.00

WCC street light maintenance £60.98

WCC new street Light Vicarage Lane £1580.51

HSBC charge £8.00

Staff salaries January £574.40

11.AOB

- **The village spring clean!**

A community litter pick and sign cleaning morning was held on March 23rd. A big thanks to those who came out – such a rewarding couple of hours which benefits the whole community. Another will be held in September, so watch this space. Again, if anyone wishes to loan any equipment to litter pick please contact the Clerk.

- **Annual Village Meeting 27th May 2025 at The Priors Hall – 7pm**

The annual village event will be happening again with lots of the community groups in attendance so come along and find out what everyone has planned for the year.

The meeting concluded at 8.45 pm.

The next meeting of the Parish Council is as follows:

Tuesday 13th May 2025

At The Priors Village Hall

7.30pm All Welcome