

Priors Marston Parish Council
Annual General Meeting
Friday 26th May 2017, 19.30
The Priors Hall, Shuckburgh Road, Priors Marston

DRAFT MINUTES

In attendance: Cllr John Appleton (Chair) Cllr Viv Nind, Cllr Laura Lucas, Cllr Nick Fulford, Cllr Bob Stevens, Emma Hooker (Clerk)
Five members of the public attended the meeting.

1. **Apologies:** Cllr John Franklin

2. **Welcome from the Chair**

John Appleton welcomed everyone to the AGM and opened the meeting

3. **Declaration of Interests**

Councilors were asked to complete a register of Interest declaration by the Clerk. These were completed for all those in attendance. No declarations declared.

4. **Approval of the minutes of the last AGM, held on Friday 27th May 2016**

Approved – Proposed LL and Seconded VN

5. **Annual Report of the year 2017**

The Clerk presented the village annual report for 2017

Annual Report 2017

Priors Marston Parish Council consists of the following councilors: - John Appleton, John Franklin, Laura Lucas, and Vivien Nind. Nick Fulford was seconded as a Councilor in September 2016 therefore there are no vacancies at this time.

Helen Keeves resigned as Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer in September 2016. The Parish Council thank Helen for all her hard work during her time with us and are pleased to have welcomed Emma Hooker as the new Clerk from September 2016.

In the last year the Parish Council has: -

- ✓ Maintained and repaired the playground, including monthly safety checks and an annual independent ROSPA safety inspection.
- ✓ Replaced 7 additional streetlights with new LED technology to comply with current environmental standards bringing the total to 12 new streetlights. The village has 22 streetlights in total and we will continue to replace the old technology. We will aim to replace the further 10 lights with LED technology in 2017. Electricity consumption has reduced since undertaking this initiative.
- ✓ Reviewed and commented on 44 planning applications and attended a number of Stratford District Council (SDC) planning committee meetings
- ✓ Upheld the high standard of maintenance and cleanliness of the village
- ✓ Arranged for all white road markings to be refreshed, this has been done with only one area outstanding
- ✓ Updated and cleaned various village road signs.

- ✓ Damaged verges repaired by Highways and keep in continual contact with Highways on ways of improving verges and green areas within village
- ✓ Created a new website which is now fit for purpose and holds all legal documents, agendas and minutes to comply with the Transparency Code.
- ✓ Defibrillator Training awareness morning arranged where 30 villagers attended.

The Parish Council has a duty to protect and enhance our village and its surrounding environment wherever possible. The National Planning Policy Framework requires Priors Marston to have a village plan to help shape future development. Priors Marston has been confirmed as a Category 4 local service village and as such will be expected to provide some additional houses. The Parish Council will monitor this very closely now the SDC core strategy has been adopted. This means the Village Plan can now be updated. We have had 8 residents express an interest in updating the plan and we are in discussion with SDC to get their support in producing an appropriate questionnaire and analysis of the results to produce a fit for purpose village plan.

In the coming 12 months we aim to: -

- ✓ Review the condition of village footpaths and rights of way
- ✓ Develop a maintenance plan for all village assets
- ✓ Re-instate damaged verges
- ✓ Continually update the village website and Facebook page
- ✓ Provide regular updates on the village notice board and in The Parish News
- ✓ Update Village Plan

6. Accounts for year to 31st March 2016

Cllr John Appleton presented the accounts for the Parish Council and are attached to the file set of minutes and forms part of them. They are also available on the Parish Council website for inspection.

7. District Council – Cllr Chris Williams (read by Clerk in Cllr Williams absence)

Chief Executive - Earlier this year Paul Lankester, the CEO of Stratford District Council was made redundant and the Council is now run by two Officers, David Buckland formerly Chief Financial Officer and Dave Webb formerly head of Housing. The Council itself consists now of 36 elected Members, a reduction from 62 members when I was originally elected in 1998.

Core Strategy – The Core Strategy was finally approved in June 2016 and the implications of this policy are already having an affect on the quality of housing applications Stratford District Council is receiving. Last year, SDC had the second most planning applications of any District Council in England. An example of the new policy concerns Wellesbourne Airfield where an owner issued notices to all occupants of the airfield that flying was to cease on 1st March 2017, the buildings would be demolished and new housing erected. Stratford DC issued a Stop Notice to prevent the demolition and threatened to compulsory purchase the airfield quoting the Core Strategy where is the airfield is to be retained for flying operations. I understand that the developer has told the landowner that they will not now proceed with any activity at this location.

District Council Budget - The District Council met on Monday 27th February 2017 to set the

Budget for the next financial year. The event was shorter than usual and the meeting had finished within two hours. Council Tax will rise by 2% for the next year, which equates approximately to 0.5p per week increase for a Band D property. It is interesting to note this year that the Police are not increasing their precept and that the County Council budget has been kept to a minimum of 3.9%. The District Council has been extremely prudent with expenditure during the past year and are no longer working with adjoining authorities in an attempt to reduce operating costs by sharing services. The trial did not reveal any worthwhile savings.

Local Elections – A By-Election in the Red Horse Ward, adjacent to our Ward, was held on

Thursday 9th March to elect a new District Councilor in place of Bart Dalla Mura who had resigned due to work commitments. The result was as follows:

John Fielding (Conservative) 476 (Elected)

Edward Fila (UKIP) 92

Patricia Hotson (Green Party) 56

Philip Vial (Lib Dem) 266

As a result of this By-Election the make up of political parties at the District Council is as follows:

Conservatives 30, Lib Dems 4, Independent 1, Labour 1

Annual Meeting at Stratford – At the full Council Meeting held on 17th May 2017, Cllr George Atkinson was appointed to be Chair of the District Council for the forthcoming year. Cllr Chris Saint continues in his role as Leader of the Council.

8. County Council - Cllr Bob Stevens

First of all I would like to say how proud and honored I am to have been re-elected as your County Councillor for the next 4 years. I intend to continue supporting this village and you the residents and, as far as I am able, to preserve Priors Marston's rural character.

The Chief Executive retired in February and the Council is now to be managed by 2 joint managing directors. Government funding cuts have already lead to a further £20 million to be found in a budget that has already been reduced by £90 million since 2013. These have resulted in the loss of over 500 posts in a staff of around 5000 people. This has been achieved by early retirement, staff moving on to other jobs and a few redundancies, most of which have been voluntary. This has led to staff turbulence and familiar faces being moved or leaving, thus creating a loss of continuity in many areas particularly the highways department. With this background Warwickshire continues to maintain most of its services. The council's annual budget is just under £400million a year of which nearly half goes on Adult services and nearly £100 million on children and child protection. In order to meet our commitments we have reluctantly increased our council tax by 1.9% plus the added 2% allowed by government to meet the Adult Social service pressures We are all living longer and generally enjoy a healthy active life. However in later years we need more help and support and put extra strain on both the health service and home carers. Complexes like Tithe lodge in Southam are

designed to alleviate this by allowing people to live in their own homes where support is readily available. The cost of full time care in a Care home is in the region of £500 per week, which, with the introduction of the minimum wage is progressively rising. We are also working towards closer cooperation with the health services especially the CCG's and the Hospitals in Warwickshire; once again to ensure people are safe to return to their own homes and are adequately looked after.

Education and Children's services is another area where pressures continue to mount – particularly with respect to children's safeguarding. Although to date we have not had any serious cases in Warwickshire authorities all around us have. Birmingham, Coventry and Leicester are all authorities whose children's department is under scrutiny. As regards schools; as more and more schools become academies or free schools so the local Authority involvement is less.

Indeed it is the local authorities responsibility to ensure every child has a place in a suitable school. The running of that school is the responsibility of the head teacher and governors. This school here is a good school and we are lucky that our children have access to sound primary and secondary education. As far as I am concerned that will remain so and the latest letter from Southam College says just that.

Local government itself is in a state of flux. Not only are there the austerity measures being taken by the government which are effecting all departmental budgets but the debate about unitary authorities and combined authorities is again rearing its head. I am an advocate of unitary authorities as where it has happened in Shropshire, Wiltshire and Devon and Cornwall there have been real savings in the long term. This election has produced a working majority and I will try and persuade my colleagues that we should investigate the possibility of Warwickshire becoming one. However without consensus of all districts it cannot happen. Indeed both Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire have had to abort their proposals. On the other hand as regards combined authorities, which in our case would mean joining up with Birmingham, I am presently opposed. The west midlands combined authority elected a mayor in May and despite the political swing I will need persuading that we should join.

We are experiencing a great deal of new development both in the village and the surrounding area. This together with the growth in local industry, in particular Jaguar Land rover, is placing enormous strains on our infrastructure. Roads become overcrowded, Medical services become stretched and villages, whilst we welcome the new blood, are in danger of losing their rural character. Our schools too will be full to capacity. I have been and will continue to ensure that promised Developer contribution money is spent where the developments (or their unintended consequences) are felt. And of course there is HS2, which as you know I have opposed from the outset and the effect it will have on the area especially during the construction phase. It has slipped at least 6 months and presently due to start construction mid next year. They are yet to appoint a main contractor.

Finally, what have I been doing? As I have recently learnt Feldon division is a large rural area and as well as Priors Marston and Priors Hardwick it covers from Bishops Itchington to Long Itchington and Wormleighton Ufton, Ladbroke and many of the hamlets in between. Farnborough and Fenny Compton have joined us now that the new boundaries are incorporated. This has reduced the number of County Councillors in Warwickshire by 5.

I now attend 9 parish Councils, chair the community forum and hold the occasional surgery in some of the villages. More recently I have been chair of the WCC Pension fund investment committee presently valued at about £1.7 billion and the proposed merger with other funds to create a pension fund for our 46,000 members of nearly £40 billion. A daunting task. All the time I have championed the Armed forces community covenant and our ex-service charities. These two roles will continue. The County council held its AGM earlier this week. The breakdown of councillors is Cons 36; Labour 10, Lib-Dems 7 green 2 Independent 2. This large majority was evident at the few votes we had. There are 20 new Councillors (35%) who are beginning to find their way around Shire Hall

As far as the village is concerned as well as advising your parish council on county council issues I continue to press for improvements to the Harbury Lane/Fosse crossroads and for speeding measures throughout the village. Indeed speeding is an issue in the whole of the county. You have an excellent parish Council with whom I enjoy working and supporting their many projects and more importantly I am pleased to be able to help and advise any villager who is struggling to understand the complexities of local government.

9. Parish Council Meetings 2016/2017

Parish Council Meetings will be held on the second Monday of the month, bi-monthly at 7.30. As follows: -

- Monday 10th July 2017
- Monday 11th September 2017
- Monday 13th November 2017

10. Questions from the public.

Chair invited the public present to ask any questions of the Council.

* David Adams asked if he could join the steering group for the Village plan. Clerk confirmed he would be very welcome and will add Mr. Adams to all correspondence in relation to this.

* Mr. Lee Robinson asked if the Council would be advertising the new website and who is the contact to amend any content.

Clerk explained that is hadn't been 100% ready to launch before now, and will be placing something into the ~Parish News in the near future.. Clerk is also the contact in relation to the website content.

The meeting closed at 20.05pm