



Minutes

Annual Parish Assembly Meeting of Preston on Stour Parish Council

Held on: Thursday 18th May 2023 at 8:00pm
Place: Preston-on-Stour Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Will Spencer (Chair), Anna Corser (Vice-Chair),

In attendance: Laura Callow (Parish Clerk)

Members of the public: 8

- 15/23 **WELCOME and APOLOGIES-** Not Present- James Seccombe
- 16/23 **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**
The minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly Meeting 26th May 2022 confirmed.
- 17/23 **THE PARISH YEAR-** Will read out his report and this is attached to the minutes.
- 18/23 **STRATFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL-** Cllr Dominic Skinner introduced himself and gave us an insight to his architectural background and how this will benefit us as a rural village. He has already started going around the local villages to see where he can help and support. A full report is attached to minutes.
- 19/23 **WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL-** Izzy Seccombe gave an update. All things wild are twin tracking their options at the moment. A second site has come up and there is a bit of pressure for that. Cost of living crisis has meant we are working more with warm hubs, food banks and supported more as they increase. Added to welfare fund by putting in £1 million to help with crisis. Working more to get people into work. Great outcome of Chief executive of the year. Ofsted result was good, we aim to change this to outstanding next time. Councillor grant fund is now open and available till mid-June.
- 20/23 **ALSCOT ESTATE -** Tom Bridge gave an update. Full report is attached to Minutes.
- 21/23 **COMMUNITY REPORTS-**
- **Preston Environmental Group-** Ron Hoe informed us about PEG. PEG was established in 2014. PEGs aim is to bring more wildlife to the village. They host walks monthly for anyone to attend. 21st April they held their first open day which was a success. Thanked Parish council for their support. They are taking over a section of the new church yard. Full report is attached to the minutes.
 - **Parochial Church Council -** Andrew Holman-West has given a report which is attached to the minutes.
 - **Village Hall -** Mr Jennings spoke on behalf of the hall committee. The village hall has recovered very well since covid. They have quite a few regulars which is good and financially they are doing well but expect a high increase in electric when their contract ends. Prestfest was a success last year although we didn't make any money from it. village BBQ is provisionally booked for 2nd July and the harvest supper for Mid-October. Film Night is on the last Friday of the month and is £3.50. They have had some great films. We are looking for new members to join the committee.

- The Yoga Studio - no report
- The Village Shop/Café- no report

22/23 **MATTER RAISED BY PARISHIONERS** - no matter was raised

23/23 **20'S PLENTY REPORT** - funding we get from the solar farm we would like to put towards this. It would be a good investment and a lot of the Parishioners agree.

24/23 **TO CONSIDER CLOSURE OF THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

The meeting was closed at 09.18pm

Proposed: Cllr Spencer Seconded: Cllr Corser All in favour

Signed:

CHAIRMANS REPORT

It is amazing how quickly the last year has passed.

Laura Callow has now been our Parish Clerk for just over a year and has continued her role with great enthusiasm, attending several training sessions and gaining further qualifications.

The website has been updated and now has all the required information accessible, with thanks to Laura and James.

In 2022 the greens were mown by Thomas Fox and an area was left uncut during the summer at the request of Preston Environmental Group to promote biodiversity.

Since March 2023 the cutting of the greens has been taken on by John Cawley who had tendered a lower price. So far 4 cuts have taken place and the greens are looking tidy despite the unfavourably wet start to summer.

We made a grant of £500 to St. Mary's Church to help towards upkeep of the church which has incurred major expenses in recent years.

We have considered several planning applications and have tried to preserve the historic aspects of the village whilst still looking to the needs of the 21st century.

Throughout the year we have been supported by our WCC councillor Izzy Seccombe and SDC councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell who have attended our meetings when possible and have given advice and regular updates by email.

Penny-Anne has stood down from SDC and her place has been taken by Dominic Skinner following the election on 4th May. We look forward to working with him over the coming years.

On 7th May this year a village event was held on the green to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III, with bring your own picnic, drinks provided by Alscot Estate and live music by local performers.

I would like to thank all councillors and everybody for their work during the year.

WILL SPENCER 18th May 2023

Report District councillor - Cllr Dominic Skinner
mob. 07783 740520
Council Email TBC
Dmskinner4quinton@gmail.com

MAY 2023

Elections

I'm very proud and humbled to have been elected as the district councillor for the Quinton Ward at the local elections on the 4th May. I thank residents for the trust they have put in me. I will do all I can for my residents over the next four years and I look forward to developing a strong and positive relationship with the parish council.

I would also like to congratulate all new and returning parish councillors.

As you will most likely be aware now, the makeup and therefore leadership of SDC has changed as a result of the elections. The current political standings of the Council's 41 seats are:

- Conservatives - 12 seats
- Liberal Democrats - 25 seats
- Independent - 1 seat
- Green - 3 seat

The actual number of wards is 39, of which 2 have 2 District Councillors because of their size. Turnout for the elections across the Wards varied with the highest being Welford on Avon 49.3% and the lowest Southam South 28.8%. Average turnout for the District as a whole was 39.29%. The Liberal Democrat group, as the largest party on the council, are in the process of forming the new administration.

Full results can be found on the Council's website:

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/news/press.cfm/current/1/item/137970>

Concerns had been expressed about new Voter ID requirements. SDC reported that just 12 people were turned away and did not vote as a result of failure to provide necessary ID (0.03%). It is not possible to determine how many people were deterred from voting as a result of the new legislation.

New Council

The Annual Meeting of the District Council is on 24th May which will be attended by all Councillors. At this meeting the Councillors who will take up the 7 Portfolio Holders positions will be agreed. These are:

- Leader
- Deputy Leader
- Law and Governance
- Environmental and Neighbourhood Services
- Housing and Customer Services
- Development (including Planning and Enforcement)
- Finance

In addition, the Chairs of the 6 Council Committees will also be confirmed. These are:

- Planning
- Employment
- Audit and Standards
- Regulatory
- Licensing Panel
- Overview & Scrutiny

There are also a number of outside bodies, to which representatives of the Council need to be appointed. In keeping with the Liberal Democrat commitment to a transparent, open, fair and accountable Council, the important **Committee of Overview and Scrutiny** will be chaired by a District Councillor of an opposition party. Overview and Scrutiny is the committee that holds the Cabinet to account. In previous years this was chaired by the same party controlling the Cabinet.

Parish councils and District Council

An important priority of the new Council is to listen to our communities. This includes liaising with, and highlighting the important role parish councils play in our rural district. My aim is to develop a 'proactive' rather than reactive approach to working with the parish council. To support this, I would like the opportunity to arrange a meeting to discuss the objectives and goals the parish council has set itself and how best I can support these going forward.

UK Shared prosperity Fund Round 2

The UKSPF Round 2 will be announced in May. There will be two briefing sessions on the application process and fund criteria, and I have been reassured there will be a much wider window to apply for the fund. Parish Councils receive a call to apply via WALC.

Rural England Prosperity fund

This fund specifically supports businesses and creates jobs in rural areas.

- Capital grant funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas.
- Capital grant funding for investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.
- Capital grant funding for rural circular economy projects.

Residents' concerns

I have already met with a number of residents since my election to discuss issues around the area. These include (but are not limited to) overgrown hedging that is blocking pavements/paths, width of some paths in the area (limiting access for disabled and pushchair users) and speeding. Concerns have also been raised about improvements to playground equipment and support for a more eco approach to landscaping. While some of these areas are generally covered by WCC, I will liaise with our WCC councillor to ensure they are addressed. I will also contact the parish council separately on any other issues as appropriate.

Preston Parish Council – Alscot Estate May 2023 Report

Biodiversity Net Gain

- Confirmed that seeding of Lake Park has been successfully and that Yellow rattle is now growing in Lake Park. This will be managed by 1 late hay cut this year once all vegetation has seeded.
- River meadow and The Mound will continue to undergo nutrient stripping and therefore will be cut and removed 2 or 3 times through the summer, with soil testing taking place to ascertain whether yellow rattle can be planted in late autumn 2023.
- South Warwickshire Farmers Group attended walk to look at BNG.
- The Croft school attend a biodiversity and environment day with Year 6 students.
- Plans continued to be reviewed regarding potential, much larger, phase 2 project BNG project.

Forestry

- Over 6500 trees planted in winter 2022/23, mixture of hedge plants, introducing diversity into existing woodlands, replacing diseased and dying ash trees.
- Thinning work continues across estate.
- Work will continue through the spring and summer ensuring the newly planted trees are cared for.
- Preparation for next winters planting is already under way – as many as 9000 trees could be planted – depending on availability.

Planning

- Planning permission secured for new roofs for Shipston and Stratford Lodges (G1 listed).
- Planning permission secured for solar farm – tenants, Elgin Energy, are now preparing plans for delivery. As soon as timeframes are agreed, relevant parties will be informed.
- Planning permission submitted to repair collapsed section of main wall.
- Conservation Area tree works permission submitted to SDC for 4 different tree works within Preston – all of which are directly affecting and damaging property.
- Works not requiring LBC or FUL planning on 48 Preston being carried out under direction of SDC
- LBC and FUL Application submitted for landscaping works for 46-48 Preston

Development

- Certas - planning due to be submitted autumn 2023 for new fuels and oils distribution site on Atherstone Airfield.
- Work continues investigating options for the various redundant and/or derelict properties across the estate.

Other news

- Warwick Cricket Club 3rd team have now taken on the lease for the cricket ground within in the park.
- Filming took place at Alscot Park for an episode of 'Father Brown'

Up and coming Events

- 15th June – Alscot Estate Friendly Cricket Match (community engagement)
- 22-25th June – Art in the Park, part of Warwickshire Open Studios 17th June – 2nd July
- 17th sept - Memory Walk and open garden to support Shakespeare Hospice

Preston Environmental Group Report 18/05/23

Hi

I am Ron Hoe and here to report on Preston's Environmental Group, PEG.

PEG was established in 2014 after a Parish Plan revealed that an amazing 92% of residents thought that nature and the countryside was important to them.

This should be celebrated, some of us thought, so PEG was born.

Nearly 10 years later we are still going strong, and currently have 31 members.

PEG's aim is to connect with nature and help Preston become more wildlife friendly.

So how do we do that?

We hold talks on environmental issues, invite experts to help us explore the nature we have around us, hold a walk every month, put up nest boxes and bat boxes, and establish wildflower areas. Our first wildflower patch, was established in 2015, and is at the entrance to the village. When you leave tonight, pay it a visit, as it is starting to look particularly good.

As well as this wildflower area we have three others. Two are adjacent to the magnificent lime tree in front of the village cafe.

The best way to enjoy this area is to go into the cafe, buy a cup of their exceptional coffee, walk up the bank to the seat, sit, sip your coffee and relish what a lovely place Preston on Stour is.

The third area is in the top grave yard.

We are delighted that our Parochial Church Council have agreed to PEG managing a patch for the benefit of wildlife. An area to the right of the entrance is now being left to grow in the way ancient meadows would. It will be harvested later in the year. There are paths cut through the area and we hope as well as being for the benefit of pollinators, it will be a lovely place to sit and contemplate.

On Saturday 22 April, PEG held its first open day and judging by the reaction of the 40 or so people attending it was a great success.

Its aim was to update residents about PEG and the current situation of our wildflower areas.

Among the interesting exhibits was an excellent nature table by our Parish Council Chairman. Thanks Will, you cant beat a nature table, that's what I say. We were also delighted to have an excellent display from Alscot about their very exciting Biodiversity project. This was great to see and attracted a lot of interest.

I have one last thing to tell you about.

PEG is playing a major part in organising a very exciting talk called **Swifts and the story of life on earth**. This will be held on 17th June at KES in Stratford. A flyer with full Information has been placed on your seats.

It is a unique and very special event featuring two of UK's best nature writes Mark Cocker and Charles Foster and two of our best wildlife artists, Alison Ingram and Jonathon Pomroy. Without doubt an event not to be missed. I do hope some of you can attend.

Swifts are one of our most iconic and exciting birds, and under so much pressure they are now on the endangered list. Not that many years ago Swifts nested in this village, and they used to scream up and down the main street. Sadly no longer.

They are just one example of what is going wrong with nature and why we should care passionately enough, to want to reverse its decline.

If you are not already a member and would like to help us try and reverse this trend then please join us.

PEG would love to have you as part of its group.

Thank you.

18th May 2023

Report from Andrew Holman-West

Thank you very much for the invitation but I'm afraid I am due to be on the Continent on the 18th so, unless plans change, I won't be able to make the meeting. However, I attach below a brief update on matters relating to the church which I hope can be read out at the meeting.

- The self-seeded suckers have been cut back along the north wall and track and revealed a significant collapse of this wall. It is intended to stabilise what is left and rebuild it in due course once the wall by the village green has been repaired.
- The repair to the wall on the village green has been delayed due to the wet weather. It had been hoped to remove the yew stumps and excavate the ground behind the wall in March, but this has not been possible. We hope the work will be done as soon as the ground is dry enough to support machinery and the repair will be complete by mid-summer. However, this will be dependent on the weather...
- The new roof seems to be holding up well and no leaks have been detected. The surface is weathering nicely.
- The church has had its Quinquennial Survey and the findings are all minor – I await the hard copy report.
- The Annual Parochial Church Meeting is taking place in the church at 09:15 on Thursday 25th May – all are welcome to attend.
- The PEG have taken over the maintenance of part of the new churchyard with a view to increasing the bio-diversity of the site.
- The sheep are back in the old churchyard.
- The bellringing team are keen for more volunteers to learn the ancient skill. No great strength is required and ladies are very welcome to join too – it is a mental challenge rather than a physical one and certainly not that easy to do well.
- We welcome any new volunteers, whether for bellringing, accounting, admin/secretarial or physical maintenance / grass cutting.

Best wishes,

Andrew