



SALFORD PRIORS PARISH COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT 2010 – 2011

PERIOD OF REPORT

This Annual Report covers the work of the Parish Council for the period commencing at the beginning of April in 2010 and ending at the end of March 2011.

PARISH COUNCIL

The year was a turbulent one for the Council. Long standing Chairman, Cllr. KA James had resigned in January 2010 and Cllr. AW Wolfe was elected Chairman. Cllr. Wolfe resigned as Chairman in November 2010 and then Cllr. Myers resigned both as Vice-Chairman and as a Councillor shortly afterwards. Cllr. JR Stedman was elected as Chairman at the meeting on 1st. December 2010 and Cllr. L Wright was elected as Vice-Chairman. Liam Maude was co-opted as a Councillor at the meeting on 19th. January 2011 following due process.

The Parish Council held 12 Ordinary meetings during the year in addition to the Annual meeting in May and the Annual Parish Meeting in April. An Extraordinary Meeting of the Council was held on 8th. November 2010. All meetings were held in The Memorial Hall, Salford Priors. During the year 210 members of the public attended meetings with the largest attendance being when the switch-off of footway lights was under discussion. A Public Meeting to discuss the lights was held on 17th. November.

Attendance by Councillors: (All meetings excluding the Public Meeting - out of 15)

AW Wolfe (14); JR Stedman (14); LG Wright (15); RA Francis (10); DC Penn (15); M Myers (10 from 10); A Quiney (14); L Maude (3 from 3)

Attendance by County and District Councillors

P Barnes (11); B Slaughter (7); D Pemberton (4); KA James (0)

GENERAL

The year was also a difficult year for the District and County Councils due to the general economic situation whereby large cuts in finance were resulting in reductions in services and the resources available to carry out the Councils' functions. The same issues were observed in the privatised utilities. All this was reflected in the time it took for the Parish Council to get action on basic services or information requests and all the wasted time in chasing up such items. Also, the availability of grants was strictly reduced.

HIGHWAYS

WCC implemented new speed limits on Station Road and Evesham Road through Salford Priors and Abbots Salford. A build-out chicane at the west end of Salford Priors had to be removed and the length of the 30mph section was extended. A new Vehicle Activated Sign was installed in this area.

In Dunnington, there was concern about parking by parents taking their children to the school near the cross roads with Broom lane and the B4088. At the time of writing this issue remains unresolved.

Severn Trent carried out extensive works in School Road to replace broken sewers and they also replaced the overflow outfall west of St Matthews Church. The work involved a road closure of two weeks and, due to the efficient management by Severn Trent, very little disturbance was caused.

Stratford DC installed a new sign for Hedges Close and the Parish Council agreed to provide a new bus shelter at this location. The Parish Council were consulted regarding signage and road diversions for the CLA Gamefair. The Council made strong representations to the County Council regarding the omission of School Road from their winter gritting schedule and the need for this was clearly demonstrated by a lengthy period of bad weather over Christmas. The County's response has so far been negative.

FOOTWAY LIGHTS

The process that led to the switch off of some footway lights in September last year actually began in October 2009 when the Parish Council decided to carry out an independent physical inspection of the lights. This inspection also noted that several of the wooden poles were rotted at the top.

Councillors made their own inspection of all the lights in July 2010 and considered that there was some confusion regarding the purpose of the lights and noted that they were provided solely for lighting footways and were not provided to illuminate the highways. It was considered that many of the lights, away from the housing estate areas, could not be justified as they served just a very few houses where foot traffic at night was virtually non-existent.

The Council recognised that reducing the number of lights could have advantages; a saving in energy, a reduction in maintenance costs, a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint, and a reduction in the cost of repairing the faulty lights. Council also realised that future budgets will be constrained and that they were duty bound to consider all possible economies.

Switching off 31 lights proved very controversial and became more complex as the year developed. The main focus for the Council has been the wooden poles. There are 33 of these and they were installed about 45 years ago. In trying to establish the ownership of the poles a meeting was held with an expert from Central Networks and the age and condition of the poles was discussed. He explained the classification system used by Central Networks and said that, by virtue of their age, all of our poles fall into the "suspect" category. This assessment was confirmed in a letter to the Council.

Under the terms of the Council's insurance policy it is obliged to disclose any information that may affect the policy. Accordingly, the Council had to inform AON/Allianz that Central Networks had declared all the wooden lighting poles "suspect". AON responded indicating that public liability insurance could be withdrawn from the Council in respect of the wooden poles.

The Council has two main options; either remove the poles completely, or, test all the poles, replace those that are unsafe either with new wooden poles or steel columns, and advise the insurance company accordingly. A decision as to the way forward will be made at the next Council meeting.

The issues regarding the wooden poles have not taken away other issues with the remaining lights. Four concrete posts are still considered to need replacing. A questionnaire has been circulated to residents living close to these lights to see if there is a demand to replace these lights.

Also, eight lights in St Matthews Close, and Perkins Close are mercury lights and are due to be phased out by 2015 under European legislation. The mercury light is also the least efficient of the street lighting types and will have to be replaced.

The Council is also considering the possibility of replacing the existing lighting controls to enable lights to be switched off for a set period each night, for example, from 12.30am to 5.30am.

The Council hopes that residents will recognise that a large number of the footway lights are past their "sell-by" date and need replacing or removing. The technical issues are not straightforward and every single light needs to be assessed separately. The cost of replacing individual lights is much higher than originally thought because of the constraints imposed from Central Networks. However, the implications of losing insurance cover for the lights are unthinkable.

SEWERAGE AT B4088

Following requests from residents the Parish Council organised a special meeting with Severn Trent and subsequently made an application for improved sewerage under S101A of the Water Act. This project is currently in the investigation stage.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Parish Council embarked on a long process of providing affordable housing in 2008. Following a needs survey, and then a site selection process, a proposal for six houses on land at the end of Tothall Lane by School Road was submitted for consideration.

AMENITIES AND PLAYING FIELD

The Playing Field is a major asset owned by the Council and its maintenance represents a significant proportion of the annual budget. During this year works included provision of new control gear for the solar lights, re-siting of the goalposts, repairs to the surface under the swings, extensive litter clearance, mole control, and replacement of litter bins. It is disappointing that continuing vandalism and littering, particularly of drinks bottles and cans, causes additional costs to residents through their Council tax. Council considered the increase in dog fouling on the playing field and urges all dog owners to act responsibly when exercising their pets.

The three year contract for mowing in the parish expired in March 2011 and the opportunity was taken to effect savings by reducing the specification in some areas. The new contractor is Hightrees Landscape Services Ltd.

The Council uses four notice boards in the parish to inform residents and the three wooden boards were refurbished by cleaning and re-sealing.

TOPs

During the year the Parish Council gave serious consideration to the future of TOPs. The importance of TOPs as a resource, particularly for young people in the parish, was recognised and plans to maintain the fabric and extend the lease with Warwickshire CC were implemented in conjunction with the TOPs Management Committee.

COMMUNICATIONS

During the year the Council published and circulated newsletters in April, November, January, and March. Richard Dare uploaded information to the website until Cllr. Maude took over this role in March. The Parish Council is very grateful to Richard for his help in this work.

PLANNING

The Marsh Farm Liaison Group was re-constituted with the extension of quarrying to the north of Broom Lane. The Group is chaired and administered by the Parish Council and also has representatives from Bidford and Broom, CEMEX, SDC, WCC, and South Warwickshire Environmental Association. The Group meets two times each year and also carries out one site inspection.

Several representations have been made regarding the cutting down of trees under various planning applications. The Parish Council is most concerned about this loss of trees but has received little support from the District Planning Authority. The Council also pressed for the Pine Tree on School Road at the entrance to Orchard Farm to be afforded the protection of a tree preservation order but again without success. As a consequence the Parish Council intends to meet with the Ward Members and Planning Officers to find out why their strong representations are being disregarded.

The Parish Council followed up various complaints at Dunnington including noise issues from the nearby caravan site and the illegal use of residents' wifi connections.

FINANCE

Review of expenditure 2010 - 2011

Total income during 2010 – 2011 (excluding VAT) was £ 50163.30

The main items of income were:

Precept	47000.00
SDC Mowing grant	2225.60
Allotments	468.00
TOPs service charge	450.00

Total expenditure during 2010 – 2011 (excluding VAT) was £ 42891.59

The main items of expenditure were:

Mowing and flower displays	13595.58
Communications	475.00
Highways and Footway lighting	4218.72
Projects	1540.33

S137 payments, Donations	700.00
Strategic expenditure including TOPs	5087.91
General administration inc. Staff costs	17274.05

Expenditure was less than budgeted due to delays in carrying out works on the footway lights. At their meeting in March, Council approved the expenditure of £ 3124 on the provision of a new bus shelter at Hedges Close, School Road.

Donations made

During the year the Parish Council made donations to Stratford CAB, Salford Priors Youth Club, Salford Priors Fete Committee, Salford Priors Royal British legion, and Salford Priors C of E Primary School.

Precept for 2011 - 2012

The Precept for the next financial year is £ 47000. This is the money the Parish Council needs to spend to carry out its responsibilities to all residents. Services provided from the Precept include Amenity Mowing, Verge Mowing, Maintenance of the Playing Field and Allotments, Providing Flower Planters and Displays, Maintenance and Servicing of TOPs and the Parish Office, Providing and maintaining Footway Lighting, and providing the link between residents and the District and County Councils.

The Precept has been frozen at last year's total and, taking inflation into account, this represents a small reduction in real terms. There is still much uncertainty about the footway lights and it is necessary that the Council maintains sufficient funds to deal with this issue. For a Band D property the Parish Precept is equivalent to £ 1.65 per week.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report, which was meticulously drafted by our Clerk, only highlights some of the work of the Parish Council during the last twelve months; the detailed minutes of all meetings are available for inspection at the Parish Office or on the web site.

I wish to express the Council's thanks and gratitude to our Clerk, Mike Philpott, for his dedication in serving the Council during a very difficult and demanding year. I commend his diligence and ability to communicate and correspond on the difficult issues in the past year.

As Chairman and on behalf of the Council, I would like to express my appreciation for Cllr. Tony Wolfe's leadership during his period as Chairman and also to Cllr. Marianne Myers for her work for the Parish during her time as a councillor.

Finally as Chairman I would like to record my appreciation to members of the Parish Council for all their work for the Parish. As well as attending the meetings the Clerk has listed, all of our Councillors spend many more hours each month reading documents and researching information on many matters and in particular the lighting issues. This year's work load has necessitated the formation of a Finance and General Purposes Group to allow the collation of information and procedural matters to be organized prior to formal meetings. No decisions are made at these Group meetings and non-councillors can, and have been, invited to become involved in the Group. I would also thank our District and County Council Ward members for their support and involvement.

Cllr. J R Stedman, Chairman

7th. April 2011