



News from Salford Priors Parish Council

March 2011



Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting will take place on Thursday 7th. April, at 7.30pm. at the Memorial Hall, Salford Priors. Myles Thornton from Warwickshire CPRE, will give a short presentation on their Dark Skies Campaign. The Chairman will present his Annual Report and there will be the opportunity to raise any matters of parish business and comment on the effects of the trial switch-off of footway lights.

New Councillor

Following the resignation of Cllr. Myers the Parish Council advertised the vacancy in accordance with the laid down procedures. Four expressions of interest were received. At their meeting on 19th. January the Council considered formal statements from each candidate and in a public election process co-opted Liam Maude who lives at Weethley Gate.

New Bus Shelter

The Parish Council has agreed to provide a new bus shelter by Hedges Close in School Road. This is a well-used bus stop and the pavement and road is very narrow here. The bus shelter will protect residents from the weather and from spray from the many large vehicles using this stretch of road. Work will commence shortly.

Sewerage along the B4088

There was a hiccup in the progressing of the section 101A application for improved arrangements for dealing with sewage disposal in the settlements along the B4088. Severn Trent first sacked the team working on the project and then found a way of re-employing them to continue their work. Visits have re-started and we hope there will be some conclusions by May or June.

Lighting Switch-Off

The switch off of lighting will be an important item on the Agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting. Residents will be able to put forward their views on the effect of the trial which started in September last year. A lot of information has been collected together since the public meeting in November and a summary of this is contained on the additional sheet included with this Newsletter. The Council has important decisions on lighting to make in the coming months. One positive feature reported at the last Council meeting was a saving in our energy bill for the lighting of £777.

Adopt a Planter

During the lighting debate one saving suggested by several residents was to remove the flower display planters. We would like to know if there would be any interest in residents "adopting" a planter near their home. If you are interested, please contact the Clerk.

Closure of Orchard Farm Packing Station

The Shropshire Group has stated that they propose to close their packing operation at Orchard Farm, off School Road in Salford Priors, and to move to Upper Moor near Pershore. The immediate effect will be to reduce the number of HGVs using School Road. The company hold a seven year lease on the facility and may try and lease the buildings to a third party. The Parish Council are monitoring the situation and checking the planning conditions relating to the site.

Closure of Bidford Library

The County Council are proposing to close the library at Bidford and replace it with a “virtual library” plus “mobile and outreach services”. If you are concerned about this proposal you can tell the County Council why you want to keep the library open by letter, e-mail, or telephone to Councillor Colin Hayfield at Church Farm, Shawbury Lane, Shustoke, Coleshill, Warwickshire, B46 2LA; E-mail: cllrhayfield@warwickshire.gov.uk; Telephone: 01675 481 877. Best of all, visit the library, see what it has to offer, and sign the “Save Bidford Library visitors’ book”. Residents are also invited to attend a special meeting of the Community Forum in Bidford on 9th. May when this will be the main issue on the agenda.

Late Night Buses

The Parish Council has been told that it is likely that the late night buses provided by Johnsons are liable to be cut as part of the general service reductions by the County Council.

Dog Fouling

Complaints have been received from residents regarding dog fouling on the Playing Field and on the Allotments. Surveillance by District Council staff is now taking place to help deal with this problem but we also need residents prepared to make statements if they see dog fouling taking place. It is important for dog owners to know they need to pick up from their dogs all the time, day, evening or night time! Several fixed penalty notices have been issued recently including one that was taken to court regarding a Bidford resident. Warning letters to offenders have also been issued from witness statements from the public.

Affordable Housing

Residents will be aware that there is a proposal for six affordable houses to be built at the junction of Tothall Lane and School Road. The Parish Council has considered the proposal and finds that there is a need for this type of housing in the parish. However, Councillors are concerned about the site selected and have asked for further consideration to be given by the Rural Housing Enabler.

Contact Details

Councillors

Cllr. J.R.Stedman	Tel: 01789 773 999 Chairman of the Council
Cllr. L.Wright	Tel: 01789 7784 96 Vice-Chairman of the Council
Cllr. A.W.Wolfe	Tel: 01789 773 610
Cllr. D.C.Penn	Tel: 01789 778 670
Cllr. R.A.Francis	Tel: 01789 772 313
Cllr. A L Quiney	Tel: 01789 490 639
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Clerk to the Council

Mr. Michael Philpott	Office Tel. 01789 491 336 Home Tel. 01789 772 934
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The Parish Office is situated at the rear of the Memorial Hall in Salford Priors and is generally open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10.00am to Noon

Update regarding the Footway Lighting Switch off

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 electrical integrity inspection of the lights. This work was carried out by PD Long, an electrical contractor, and in addition to his comments on the lighting fittings his report also noted that several of the wooden poles were rotted at the top. Although our maintenance contractor inspected the light fittings each year they had never commented on the condition of the poles. Cllr. Kim James, the Chairman of the Parish Council at that time, expressed concern that the report had noted defects in some of the wooden poles and Central Networks were contacted as it was felt this problem could have serious consequences for other poles throughout the Parish.

When these issues were discussed at the Annual Parish Meeting last April a resident asked if some of the lights were really needed and he was informed that removing some lights was an option still under consideration. 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.

The main focus for the Council has been the wooden poles. There are 33 of these and they were installed about 45 years ago. Our

discussions with Central Networks and BT Openreach indicate that they are owned by the Parish Council. (with the exception of 2 definitely belonging to BT Openreach and possibly 1 belonging to Central Networks). 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.

The Parish Council holds an insurance policy with AON/Allianz. Under the terms of this policy the Council 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".

This has led AON to respond indicating that public liability insurance will be withdrawn from the Council in respect of the wooden poles. Under the terms of insurance law it is believed that this will apply from the renewal date of 1.06.11. This is a critical situation for the Council because if public liability insurance is removed and someone is seriously injured the funds of the Council would be wiped out and the costs would fall to the council tax payers of the parish.

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.

However, we now know that direct replacement is not a straightforward option. Central Networks, has confirmed that "they would prefer to supply new connections from an underground network to avoid future inspection, maintenance, and fault repairs if it was technically possible and made economic

sense. Where possible, Central Networks would prefer not to provide new connections from apparatus located on third party land as they would need to secure wayleaves and consents which might be terminated at some future time leaving Central Networks with the costs of diverting their apparatus." This means that every pole that we wish to replace will be subject to a separate design and cost assessment and this will be dependent on the location and type of their most convenient network point. Generally, replacement connections will have to be by an underground cable to a network pole and not by an overhead line to a nearby house as is the current situation. At £50 per metre for an underground cable the cost for each light will be very high. All these issues will have to be considered by the Council at their meeting in April, however, the insurance situation makes the decision critical.

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. These are No.31, 7 Ban Brook Road; No.35, 40 Ban Brook Road; No.38, 1 Sanders Road; and No. 39, 9 Garrard Close. 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. In theory, this could reduce the number of hours of electricity used but there is one problem with this change. For the first 24 hours lights would be on permanently. For the next 48 hours the photo-cell is learning the

time of year. Thereafter, the lights switch off and on as required. When there is a power interruption then the whole sequence will have to re-start and as residents are well aware there are many electricity supply interruptions in the Parish.

The Council has also been trying to get solid evidence regarding many of the issues raised by residents. This has proved difficult. The police have provided crime statistics for the parish dating back to 2009. The number of crimes experienced is so small that no discernible trends can be seen. Mostly, the police have been able to identify specific factors or individual situations leading to incidents. There is no measurable link between the lights going off and changes in crime patterns.

Traffic accidents on the B4088 have been analysed for the period from 2006. There have only been 10 injury accidents of which 80 per cent occurred in daylight. There is no measurable link between the lights going off and an increase in traffic accidents.

Some residents have claimed that traffic speeds at night have increased. Some other residents have claimed that speeds have decreased. Unfortunately, WCC has made its speed measurement team redundant so it has not been possible to check this assertion. However, at the recent Community Forum in Bidford a police officer stated that speeds decreased in areas without lighting.

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.