

SALFORD PRIORS PARISH COUNCIL



Salford Priors Parish Council ANNUAL REPORT 2013 - 2014



Period of Report

This Annual Report covers the work of the Parish Council for the period commencing at the beginning of April in 2013 and ending at the end of March 2014.

General:

The period saw the council face a time of change with two parish councillors resigning from office, in June Mrs Pat Dare resigned followed in September by Mr Anthony Quiney, The council co-opted two new councillors Liam Maude and Melanie Muldowney.

In June the then Clerk to the Parish Council Mr Michael Philpott announced his retirement and left the employment of the council at the end of July, following the advertisement of the clerk's vacancy 27 applications were received with 6 being shortlisted for interview, Ms Sally Harte was appointed Clerk and took up the post in August but subsequently resigned in November 2013, since that time the administration of the council has been dealt with by a temporary Acting Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

As both posts are filled by councillors in the Absence of a Clerk no financial remuneration is paid.

Whilst this period of uncertainty or turmoil would have caused many parishes in the District serious problems apart from the suspension of the weekly opening of the Parish Office in December, the council has maintained and carried out its business as normal.

In May a new County Councillor was elected for the Bidford Divisional Ward which includes Salford Priors, Mike Brain was elected taking over from former County Councillor Peter Barnes.

Parish Council:

The Parish Council held 17 Ordinary meetings during the year in addition to the Annual meeting in May a total of 18 meetings. The Annual Parish Meeting was held on 4th April 2013. During the year 326 members of the public attended meetings with the largest attendances being 49 for the meeting on the 30th October for the meeting to discuss housing development on land off Tothall Lane opposite Parkhall. No under 18s attended any of the meetings.

The attendance at meetings saw an increase of 166 over the previous year.

Attendance by Councillors:

J Stedman (18/18): K Littleford (18/18): K James (17/18): L Maude (8/9): M Muldowney (9/9): D Penn (15/18); L Wright (15/18)

Former Councillors:

A Quiney (7/8): P Dare (2/3)

Attendance at Parish Council Meetings by County Council and District Council Ward Councillors

Warwickshire County Council: P Barnes (1/1); M Brain (7/17) - **Stratford on Avon District Council:** M Howse (12/18) D Pemberton (5/18); J Spence (9/18).

Planning:

Issues

During the year the council has held extraordinary meetings on specific planning issues surrounding housing development within the parish namely: Land off Tothall Lane opposite Park Hall for Jephson Housing, Land South of Orchard Close Salford Priors for Bloor Homes, and Land behind Garrard Close Salford Priors for Alamo Manufacturing Ltd.

Planning Applications:

During the course of the year the Council considered 21 planning applications, which included the controversial application for an extension for toilet and baby changing facilities at St Matthews Church (subsequently withdrawn) A wind farm at Froglands Lane Cleeve Prior (Wychavon District Council notification – subsequently withdrawn) Housing Development at Land off Tothall Lane (subsequently withdrawn) and an extension to the existing chicken rearing farm at Salford Lodge Farm Pitchill (planning permission granted)

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Neighbourhood Planning:

Following last year's Annual Parish Meeting the Parish Council has facilitated meetings to form a Neighbourhood Development Plan Group, a meeting was held in September with a planning consultancy specialising in Neighbourhood Development Planning, representatives of Kirwells Planning attended an open meeting where eighty three members of the public attended, from this meeting a local working group was formed.

The council were successful in obtaining a government grant of £6,300.00 from the Neighbourhood Planning Fund Locality towards the cost of delivering a plan for the Parish.

An application has been submitted to the Stratford on Avon District Council for the designation of the entire Parish as a Neighbourhood Development Plan Zone this application will be decided on the 16th June.

Ensuring its communication the NDP Group have established an information page on the Community Web-site, a Facebook page, a Twitter account and an e-newsletter.

Whilst the group is led independently and work autonomously the Parish Council remains the parent body.

Marsh Farm Liaison Group:

The Parish Council continued to lead the Marsh Farm Quarry Liaison Group, the extraction area to the North of Broom Lane is now being restored, however, the restoration of the main quarry site has presented various issues in regard to mud, debris left on Tothall Lane and the B4088 prior to Christmas the road surfaces were in a very poor condition, the Parish Council applied intense pressure on Warwickshire County Council and CEMEX to resolve the matter.

Complaints have been received on the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles accessing the site on a daily basis during the landfill restoration programme, however, there are no control restrictions on vehicle numbers.

Freedom of Information Requests:

The Council received ten Freedom of Information requests during the year, nine relating to the council's handling of planning development matters, these were all dealt with within the statutory twenty one day period by the Clerk, however, only one request relating to Complaints against councillors were made in accordance with the act, the nine requests on planning issues technically fell outside the Parish Council's Freedom of Information Policy.

Highways, Amenity Areas & General Matters:

The Council has continued in its aim to improve the appearance and amenities of the parish, the mowing of highway verges and amenities areas has been of a high standard, the flower displays through out of the parish generate favourable comments from both residents and visitors alike.

The schedule for the winter planter contract has been changed to meet the change in climatic conditions, from this year the planting schedule is being changed to a bulb based display to give a more vibrant colourful display, this has been agreed with the contractor at no extra cost to the term flower display contract.

The Parish Lengthsman carries out a wide range of duties such as clearing drains, siding out footways, cleaning road signs, and miscellaneous odd jobs. Residents are asked to report any potential jobs to the Clerk.

To commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the First World War the council agreed to establish a fund taken from the clerks salary budget until the appointment of a full time clerk, it has initially agreed to sow Flanders poppy seed at various locations in the parish and is looking to acquire land to establish a quite / reflective garden area in the Parish with public access.

Speeding Traffic:

Residents have complained on several occasions regarding speeding traffic in the settlements of Pitchill, Rushford and Iron Cross. The Parish Council has responded by commissioning and paying for Warwickshire County Council to carry out a traffic speed census in the area.

After many years of raising the issues and being at the forefront of local councils complaining of speeding motorcyclists along the A46 (T) Bypass and the summer circular "race" route through Salford Priors, Norton, Harvington, Dunnington and Arrow, Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police have responded by starting to carry out a high profile police speed awareness campaign with both marked and unmarked vehicles. The first operation resulted in thirty road offences being dealt with, five cautions for speeding being issued and one vehicle seized for having no insurance.

Playing Field:

The play areas at the field are inspected every week, in addition, an independent inspection is made on an annual basis.

The council's contractors have started an intensive programme of maintenance to the field, including the removal of one set of goal posts for levelling works. The playing surface is over sixty years old and is in need of extensive re-conditioning.

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Whilst the playing equipment remains serviceable, the Council remains concerned whether it's the right equipment for today's youngsters and is committed to improving the facilities.

Rushford / Iron Cross Sewage Scheme – Severn Trent

In March Severn Trent provided an update for residents on the proposed scheme to install a main sewage system for the Rushford / Iron Cross settlements of the Parish.

Phase 2 – April 2015 – This is the end of the feasibility study

Phase 3 – January 2016 – This represents the completion of the detail design

Phase 4 – April 2016 – Construction start

Phase 5 – April 2017 – This represents the handover of the site from the Contractor to Severn Trent.

The scheme will be fully operational and customers who have opted to be connected to the system by Severn Trent will be connected by this date.

Severn Trent cannot progress a scheme through phase 3 without planning permission, therefore they would look to submit the full planning application by August/September 2016.

This is an indicative project programme, these dates could slip for technical, legal, planning or civil engineering matters.

The sewage pumping station serving Dunnington has failed and is currently being emptied by tanker twice a week the Parish Council are in discussions with Severn Trent on a long term solution to rectify this situation with a new catchment and pumping chamber.

Dog Fouling:

The Council has received complaints on the issue of fouling of land and footways by dogs especially in the areas of School Road, School Avenue, Ridsdale Close, Perkins Close and Dunnington, the council is working with officers from Stratford on Avon District Council to ensure that the District wide bylaws on dog fouling are enforced, the penalty is a fine of up to £1000.00.

Flood Prevention Works:

Contractors for the Parish Council carried out Flood Prevention works on the Ban Brook in Tothall Lane eight tonnes of silt and debris were removed from the brook in the vicinity of Brookside House this work was made possible through a grant of £385.00 from Stratford on Avon District Council.

After many years of providing sandbags for resident's use the Parish Council withdrew the service as of the 31st March 2014 following the behavioural actions of certain residents demanding bags and expecting them to be delivered to their houses, the council in reaching its decision felt that in recent years the service was being miss-used.

Parish Notice Boards:

The council has resolved to purchase four new noticeboards, a replacement noticeboard for Dunnington and a new noticeboard for the settlements of Abbots Salford and Rushford and a new noticeboard for Salford Priors.

The boards at Abbots Salford, Dunnington and Rushford will be glazed and locked, the new noticeboard in Salford will be open for general public use and mounted in the Bus Shelter on School Road.

Allotments:

The year has again been a difficult one for allotment holders due to the extreme weather conditions. As a consequence, there are now several empty plots and the Council continues to advertise empty plots and tries to encourage residents to take one on. The Council has halved the annual rent and has also split plots in half so that the initial work does not seem too daunting.

Rights of Way

There have been no major issues to report regarding the public rights of way in the Parish this year. Minor work carried out included hedge cutting, clearance of natural obstructions and signage.

Communications

The Council has published one Newsletter during the year and this was delivered to every household in the parish. The Clerk also circulates relevant information to a list of residents by e-mail, during recent months the number of residents receiving the e-news has increased dramatically. This service is open to everyone with an e-mail address and all they need to do is to e-mail the Clerk and request their name be added to the list. The website underwent a major re-design and was re-launched in 2013 and is regularly updated, however, this relies on information / news / events being sent by Parish organisations, businesses to the Clerk for uploading on to the web-site.

The council distributed 500 meeting flyers inviting residents for the 2013/14 Annual Parish Meeting.

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TOPs

TOPs, **The Other Place Salford**, is looked after by a management committee on behalf of the Parish Council and this committee works very hard to maintain the building in good order and to develop its use for the benefit of the whole community. Groups using the building include the Salford Priors Youth Club, the St Matthew's Cupcake Cafe, the Salford Priors Amateur Theatrical Society, a Readers' Group, and the full range of Girl guiding groups; Rainbows, Brownies, and Guides. The only major item of maintenance has been the installation of new emergency steps for the Fire Exit.

BT Phone-box Dunnington

The council were successful in getting British Telecom to carry out repairs and the painting of the telephone boxes in Dunnington Iron Cross and Salford Priors.

Christmas Tree

The council has approved the installation and provision of an illuminated seven metre tall Christmas Tree for 2014 at the junction of School Road and Station Road Salford Priors. The council has agreed to a three year period dependant of obtaining some form of commercial sponsorship.

Finance

Review of expenditure 2013 – 2014 (Excludes VAT)

Total income during 2013 – 2014 was £ 59125.87

The main items of income were:

Precept	47000.00
Bank Interest	28.21
Localities Grant Neighbourhood Planning	6,300.00
Allotments	295.00
TOPs	981.39

Total expenditure during 2013 – 2013 was £ 44009.60

The main items of expenditure were:

Amenities and Environment, includes Mowing, Planters, Maintenance and Allotments	8069.25
Highways, includes Footway lighting, Signs, and Public Rights of Way	984.44
Finance, includes Donations and expenditure for Neighbourhood Development Planning	6800.00
Strategic Expenditure, includes TOPs expenditure	1723.97
Council, includes Staff salaries, Tax and NI, General Administration, and Insurance	4264.11
Council Projects, includes: Lengthsman.	4048.71

Donations made:

During the year the Parish Council made donations as follows:

Avon Valley First Responders / Difibulator	1000.00
Salford Priors RBL Poppy Appeal	100.00
Alcester Alzheimer Cafe	300.00
Bidford on Avon New Medical Centre / Bus Shelter	3000.00
Stratford Citizens Advice Bureau	300.00
Salford Priors Over 60s Club	100.00
Salford Priors CofE Junior & Infant School – New Library	2000.00

The accounts for 2013/14 are available for inspection by appointment.

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Precept for 2014 – 2015:

The Precept for the next financial year has been set at £ 47,900.00. 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, St. Matthews Churchyard extension and Allotments, Providing Flower Planters and Displays, Maintenance, Lengthsman tasks, provision of noticeboards 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 had been frozen at £47,000.00 since April 2010 this is an increase of £900 or 1.91% and, taking inflation into account, this represents a small reduction in real terms. For a Band D property the Parish Precept is equivalent to £ 1.68 per week representing a 3p per week rise over last year. £6,450.00 of the total amount being is provided through the Council Tax Support Grant. There is no assurance that this grant will be maintained at full value in future years and this would be a matter of considerable concern to the Council.

The council is currently reviewing its administrative costs and how it functions to ensure that the services it delivers represents the most cost effective use of its precept.

Appointments:

Public Rights of Way Inspector: Cllr. David Penn

Parish Playing Field Inspector: Cllr. John Stedman

Salford Priors Memorial Hall Management Committee: Cllr. Lindsay Wright

TOPs Management Committee: Cllrs. Lindsay Wright & Karen Littleford

Neighbourhood Planning Group: Cllrs. Karen Littleford, Kim James, Liam Maude & Melanie Muldowney

Ragley Quarry Marsh Farm Liaison Group: Cllrs. John Stedman & Lindsay Wright

Warwickshire Association of Local Councils: Cllr. Kim James

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would express my appreciation for the work of all of the Parish Councillors and to our County and District Ward Councillors for their commitment during the year, to the former Parish Clerk Michael Philpott who served the council with distinction for seven years.

Cllr. John Stedman

Chairman Salford Priors Parish Council

30th April 2014