



SALFORD PRIORS PARISH COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT 2011 – 2012

PERIOD OF REPORT

This Annual Report covers the work of the Parish Council for the period commencing at the beginning of April in 2011 and ending at the end of March 2012.

PARISH COUNCIL

Following the turmoil of the previous year the Parish Council made good progress in resolving the issues surrounding the footway lights whilst still managing to improve amenities and hold the precept at the same amount as the previous two years.

Long standing Parish Councillor Reg Francis resigned from the Council in May 2011 after nearly 40 years of service. Following due process a poll was held on 11th August and Lawrence Robinson was elected as a Parish Councillor. During the year Cllr. John Stedman held the position of Chairman and Cllr. Lindsay Wright was the Vice-Chairman.

The Parish Council held 12 Ordinary meetings during the year in addition to the Annual meeting in May and a Special Meeting in August. The Annual Parish Meeting was held on 7th April. During the year 125 members of the public attended meetings with the largest attendance being 32 for the Annual Parish Meeting.

Attendance by Councillors: (from 15 unless stated otherwise)

JR Stedman (14); LG Wright (12); AW Wolfe (12); RA Francis (2 from 2); DC Penn (15); A Quiney (13); L Maude (13); L Robinson (7 from 9)

Attendance by County and District Councillors

P Barnes (9); B Slaughter (1 from 2); D Pemberton (3); KA James (0); M Howse (7 from 13)

GENERAL

As in the previous year 2011/12 was again a difficult year for the District and County Councils due to the general economic situation whereby large cuts in finance resulted in reductions in services and the resources available to carry out the Councils' functions. Some key staff who had worked with the Parish Council for many years moved on from both the County and the District meaning that relationships had to be re-built in several key areas. 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. Again, the availability of grants was strictly reduced.

FOOTWAY LIGHTS

At their meeting in April the Parish Council concluded that it had to accept responsibility for the wooden poles and because of the need to maintain public liability insurance and because testing the poles was not a viable option it was essential to disconnect the supplies and remove the poles as soon as possible. This process was put in hand immediately but the tortuous workings of the utility company (which was undergoing its own takeover at the time) meant that the job was not completed until early 2012. When the poles were examined after being removed it was plainly evident that there had been no choice and the extent of the rotting in some poles was both considerable and dramatic. The risk of some fittings actually falling from some of the poles would have to be assessed as high.

During the year, consultation with residents was carried out on the estate areas around Ban Brook Road, Perkins Close, and Park Hall Mews. There was a very low response rate but no clear mandate for either removing or retaining the lights. In the absence of a clear indication from residents the Council decided to fit part night timers to all the remaining lights.

The Parish Council recognised that there was a need to replace some of the lights that had been removed, particularly along School Road, and considered several locations where a light was of strategic importance. The Council is grateful to Mr Cleary at the Post Office for allowing a new light to be provided fitted to the building and several residents have commented on the effectiveness of this new light. Another new light has been installed in

the pathway between Ridsdale Close and School Avenue. One of the solar lights from the Playing Field has been moved to School Road opposite the entrance to Orchard Farm. Other locations are being considered but every site is different and has to be assessed separately. As an example, enquiries have been made regarding a new light in the middle of School Avenue and it should be noted that the cost of providing a supply has been estimated at over £7000 because there are no underground cables in that road.

As a result of the Council's actions there has been a dramatic reduction in the energy used from 18716 kWh to 5173 kWh. a reduction of 72 per cent.

HIGHWAYS

An ongoing issue throughout the year was speeding in School Road. In September, the WCC Speedaware team carried out speed tests and reported that there was a problem, particularly during the morning peak time. Measures considered to deal with the problem included further chicanes and vehicle activated warning signs. However, the lack of funds at WCC mean this issue remains unresolved. On the Evesham Road a vehicle activated sign was installed approaching Salford Priors from Abbots Salford.

Another issue causing concern has been the inconsiderate and dangerous parking by parents collecting their children from Dunnington School. The Council has been pressing for just a short length of double yellow lines in Broom Lane leading to the Hiller's cross roads. However, WCC has been unable to action our request.

A new bus shelter was installed in School Road by Hedges Close. This bus stop was located on a narrow footway with many HGVs passing in each direction and the new shelter provides much needed protection for residents waiting for buses at this stop. A petition was then received for another bus shelter on the other side of the road. The Council is in process of identifying land ownership on potential locations.

Following several years of pressure WCC finally agreed to include School Road on the gritting schedule.

A major issue during the year was the theft of hundreds of metal gully gratings from roads throughout our and neighbouring parishes. The Council appreciated the efforts made by WCC staff to replace these gratings and lobbied for new regulations to prevent the sale of illegal scrap metal.

SEWERAGE AT B4088

Two years ago in April 2010 the Parish Council started a process to improve the sewerage for houses along the B4088. A public meeting was held and a formal application under Section 101A of the Water Act 1991 was submitted in October 2010 to Severn Trent. Consultants were appointed who visited properties and developed a scheme. In the present economic climate the Parish Council was not confident of success and so it was a surprise to receive a letter in March this year stating that our application had been successful and engineering design work would now commence with a view to the scheme being completed by 2017. The estimated cost of the scheme is £1,900,000.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In April 2008 a housing needs survey was carried out to determine the need for affordable housing in the parish. This was followed by a mapping exercise in January 2009 to determine possible locations for these affordable homes. Subsequently, a plot at the top of Tothall Lane opposite Park Hall was identified and a scheme drawn up. Progress has been slow but it is understood that funding is coming together, quotations have been sought, and a planning application is anticipated later this year.

AMENITIES AND PLAYING FIELD

Following the successful completion of a new one year mowing contract with Hightrees Landscape Services Ltd. The contract was extended for a further two years. Also, the Flower Display contract with Limebridge Rural Services Ltd. was due to end this year but because of the timing of the Jubilee displays Council decided to extend the contract for one year.

A fingerpost sign was provided in School Avenue at the entrance to the Playing Field and TOPs.

An open meeting was held at the Playing Field to meet both children and their parents. The parents agreed to provide a survey to find out what users wanted but this was not forthcoming. Several groups approached the Council regarding use of the football pitch. The Council has offered free use of the pitch and has also refurbished the goal posts and it is hoped that there will be an adult team using the pitch in the new season.

A recurring issue was the fouling of both the playing field and footpaths by dogs. Just a very few people are responsible and the Council is publicising the fact that fixed penalty fines will be awarded to offenders.

All the wooden seats in the parish were refurbished and a replacement wooden seat was installed at Abbots Salford as a memorial to John Coley. The Millennium Oak at Iron Cross was found to have a genetic fault and had to be felled. A new oak tree has been planted.

A meeting was held with allotment holders and several initiatives were agreed. However, it is disappointing that only a few of the allotment holders appear to have made much use of their plots and there are still plots available. Following a request from the Youth Club a plot was provided for the Club free of rent.

TOPs

From the Parish Council's point of view, the year was a quiet one for TOPs with few issues arising. New entrance doors were installed and new blinds were fitted to the windows. The cladding and fascia was painted and the rear steps were repaired. An unexpected electricity bill led to change of supplier. The TOPs Management Committee led by Pat Dare and John Bradfield did an excellent job in the day to day management of this facility that provides an important resource for residents and particularly young members of the community and we thank them for this.

COMMUNICATIONS

During the year Cllr. Liam Maude continued to develop the Council's web site and a gallery of pictures and other useful news was added. Agendas and Minutes of PC meetings were added on a regular basis. Several Newsletters were circulated to all houses in the parish and useful information was sent out to residents signed up to the e-news service.

PLANNING

During the year the Parish Council considered 21 planning applications, 2 listed building applications, 2 tree applications, 1 application to vary a planning permission, and 6 planning applications outside the parish but within the Vale of Evesham HGV Control Zone.

The Parish Council was very concerned that many of their comments on planning applications were disregarded by the planners at Stratford on Avon District Council and Councillors travelled to Stratford to meet the head of the department. Whilst the meeting appeared to be constructive the follow-up has been most disappointing and the Council is still challenging several decisions including the apparently simple request for a Tree Preservation Order on the Pine Tree at the entrance to Orchard Farm in School Road which has still not been granted. The Parish Council is also questioning the usage of the packing station at Orchard Farm where the planning conditions which restrict the amount of imported products and the hours of opening appear to be disregarded by the new tenants.

The District Council consulted on a new Core Strategy that will determine the allocation of houses throughout the District for the next 20 years as well as other issues. The Parish Council produced a lengthy response with helpful input from Cllr. Kim James.

MARSH FARM QUARRY

The Parish Council continued to lead the Marsh Farm Quarry Liaison Group. Good progress was being made on a revised restoration plan for the entire site that would maintain some water areas for wildlife but changes in personnel at CEMEX have delayed this plan and cause some concern. Extraction to the North of Broom Lane is well underway and here restoration is less of a problem because it is not dependent on imported fill.

CIVIC RECEPTION

A Civic Reception was held on 7th. October 2011 when former Councillors Kim James and Reg Francis were conferred with the title "Honorary Freeman of the Parish of Salford Priors" in recognition of the eminent services rendered over very many years for the benefit of the whole community. The reception was organised jointly with the Memorial Hall Management Committee and was attended by nearly one hundred residents following public advertisement of the event. The services of former Councillors Peggy Pane and Brian Slaughter (District Council) and of former Parish Clerk, Eddie Clark, were also acknowledged.

JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

In recognition of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee a day of celebrations will be held on the Playing Field in Salford Priors on 3rd. June 2012. The Parish Council is obliged to Karen Littleford and Tom Pearsall and the other members of the Jubilee Group for their efforts in organising this event on behalf of the residents of the parish.

Most of the cost of the event is being met by sponsors and the Parish Council is very grateful to local companies and individuals who have already generously donated towards what should be a most enjoyable day for all residents.

FINANCE

Review of expenditure 2011 – 2012 (Excludes VAT)

Total income during 2011 – 2012 was £ 54772.09

The main items of income were:

Precept	47000.00
Bank Interest	20.02
SDC Mowing grant	1236.44
Allotments	750.50
TOPs, Civic Reception, Jubilee Sponsors	5765.13

Total expenditure during 2010 – 2011 was £ 49976.14

The main items of expenditure were:

Amenities and Environment , includes Mowing, Planters, Maintenance and Allotments	7482.95
Communications , includes Newsletters and Website	375.00
Highways , includes Footway lighting, Signs, and Public Rights of Way	1768.09
Finance , includes Donations and advance expenditure for the Jubilee Celebrations	1512.89
Strategic Expenditure , includes the Civic Reception and TOPs expenditure	6189.04
Council , includes Staff salaries, Tax and NI, General Administration, and Insurance	16864.25
Council Projects , includes Bus Shelter, Election Expenses, Changes to Footway Lights, Speed Tests in School Road, and Seat at Abbots Salford	15783.92

Donations made

During the year the Parish Council made donations as follows:

Village Fete Committee, raffle prize	50.00
Salford C of E School, Forest School project	100.00
The Shakespeare Hospice	100.00
Royal British Legion	150.00

The Council also made a commitment to support the new Community Library at Bidford with a donation of £1000 to be paid in the year 2012 - 2013

Precept for 2012 - 2013

In November 2011 the Council invited residents to take part in a special meeting to discuss the forthcoming budget. Four residents asked to attend and a useful meeting was held.

The Precept for the next financial year has been held at £ 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. For a Band D property the Parish Precept is equivalent to £ 1.65 per week.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cllr. J R Stedman, Chairman

5th. April 2012