



Salford Priors Parish Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2012 - 2013



PERIOD OF REPORT

This Annual Report covers the work of the Parish Council for the period commencing at the beginning of April in 2012 and ending at the end of March 2013.

GENERAL

The period saw a new council being elected in May with some long serving members retiring and two new first-time councillors being elected. An important feature of meetings has been the declining interest and attendance by members of the public. Even for important issues such as next year's Budget and the potential Neighbourhood Plan only three or four persons were interested enough to come to specially arranged meetings. The Annual Parish Meeting was one of the best attended meetings of the year with 24 residents coming to hear speakers from local international engineering company Alamo and also from the organisers of the Community Forums. Most of the local community forums have been held in Bidford but for the first time, in December, one was held in Salford Priors and this will be repeated later this year.

PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council held 12 Ordinary meetings during the year in addition to the Annual meeting in May. The Annual Parish Meeting was held on 5th April. During the year 160 members of the public attended meetings with the largest attendances being 24 for the Annual Parish Meeting and 26 for the June Ordinary meeting. No under 18s attended any of the meetings.

Elections for a new council were held in May. Longstanding Councillor Tony Wolfe and new Councillor Lawrence Robinson both retired from the Council. In the elections Cllr. Liam Maude was unsuccessful and new Councillors, Pat Dare and Karen Littleford were elected. Former Chairman, Kim James, was also elected to the Council. Cllrs. Stedman, Wright, Quiney, and Penn were all re-elected. At the first meeting following the elections, Cllr. Stedman was elected as Chairman and Cllr. Wright was elected as Vice-Chairman. In the District Council elections, Johnathan Spence was elected as a ward member taking over from former Councillor Kim James. There was also an election for the first police commissioner covering the whole of Warwickshire where the successful candidate was Mr Ron Ball, Independent. A new code of conduct came into force during the year and new procedures were put in place so that the Council complied with the new requirements in all respects.

Attendance by Councillors: (from 14 unless stated otherwise)

JR Stedman (13); LG Wright (11); AW Wolfe (2 from 2); DC Penn (13); A Quiney (11); L Maude (1 from 2); L Robinson (2 from 2); P Dare (11 from 12); K James (10 from 12); K Littleford (12 from 12).

Attendance by County and District Councillors

P Barnes (10 from 13); D Pemberton (1 from 13); J Spence (4 from 13); M Howse (8 from 13)

PLANNING

Issues

The most contentious issue during the year was the activity at the Orchard Farm packing station where international company Angus Soft Fruits had taken over the lease from Sandfields. The problems related to the numerous heavy goods vehicles using the site with drivers from the Continent regularly getting lost and ending up on estate roads in the village. The site also appeared to be operating around the clock and much distress was caused to local residents with horns blowing and fridge motors running all night. The Parish Council took a series of decisive actions including getting the company to a special public meeting and holding a meeting with the head of planning at Stratford on Avon District Council. As a result, signage and instructions for drivers has been much improved and the company have been forced to make a formal application for changes to the planning permission for the site. The Parish Council is particularly concerned that the packing station should not become just a general industrial site and that it should be reserved for agricultural uses.

Another important success for the Council was the issue of a Tree Preservation Order to protect the iconic Corsican pine tree at the entrance to Orchard Farm which is an important feature of School Road.

During the year some residents from Iron Cross pressed the Council to take action regarding land at Oak Tree Farm. The Council co-ordinated inspections from both the District and County Councils and had meetings with the owners. No illegal activities were identified and the owner did make some improvements.

The government has introduced a new form of local plan called a Neighbourhood Plan. The plan is designed to encourage development but the Parish Council has not yet made a final decision whether or not to proceed. The process is both lengthy and expensive and it has, in any case, to accord with the District Council's Core Strategy. The Parish Council published its views on the core strategy last year but the whole process has been thrown into confusion by a decision by the Secretary of State regarding a proposal for some 400 new homes on the edge of Stratford. Notwithstanding these

considerations, the Parish Council is supporting a proposal to build six affordable houses at the junction of Tothall Lane and School Road and a planning application is expected in the near future.

Planning applications

During the course of the year the Council considered 27 planning applications. These included 2 listed building applications, 7 applications to fell or prune trees in the conservation area, 3 applications to vary existing permissions, 2 applications regarding electricity poles, and 13 "regular" applications.

There were two major applications considered by the Council. The first was a new medical centre in Bidford using the disused garden centre on the Stratford Road. Dr Tim Shackley was invited to speak at a parish council meeting in advance of the application and this enabled the Council to make a detailed response which strongly supported the proposal.

The second application was for a major extension at the Alamo factory. Again, the Parish Council had the benefit of hearing a presentation from the company at the Annual Parish meeting and this was followed up by a factory visit. The Council strongly supported the proposed extensions which strengthen this international company's presence in the area and which provides employment and training for local people.

Marsh Farm Liaison Group

The Parish Council continued to lead the Marsh Farm Quarry Liaison Group. We were particularly pleased that Alan Granger, Ragley Estates Manager, was able to join the group. Last year it was hoped that CEMEX would consider a revised restoration plan for the entire site that would maintain some water areas for wildlife but little progress has been made. During the year CEMEX managed to secure over 50,000 tonnes of infill materials and if this rate is maintained Marsh Farm should be completely restored in around 5 to 8 years. Extraction to the North of Broom Lane is now complete and restoration of this area should follow on quickly.

HIGHWAYS AND AMENITY AREAS

The Council has taken steps this year to improve the appearance and amenities of the parish by several initiatives. The major project undertaken was the construction of a new bus shelter in School Road opposite Hedges Close following the receipt of a large petition from local residents using this bus stop.

It has been a difficult year from a weather point of view and this was reflected in continuing difficulties with the mowing contract. This was terminated by mutual agreement and a revised specification with slightly higher and better defined standards was put out to public tender in November. Because several Councillors have a potential interest in such contracts it is essential that the decisions are made absolutely in accordance with proper procedures. In the case of the mowing contract those councillors who had declared an interest left the room and the remaining councillors made their decision on the quality and price of the tenders submitted without knowing the names of those tenderers. In the event, the three year contract was awarded to Limebridge Rural Services Ltd.

Another important initiative has been the employment of a Parish Lengthsman for a trial period of one year. The Lengthsman will carry 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.

Following requests from a few residents the Council examined the case for new footway lights at hedges Close and Evesham Road. None of these met the Council's criteria and no further action was taken.

The County Council carried out extensive works on Broom lane and resurfaced a substantial length of the road. Whilst the new surface is very welcome several problems remain. There has been a continual flow of water down the road and this appears to emanate from ground drainage. Severn Trent insists there are no leaks to their pipes. There is also a problem with heavy agricultural vehicles damaging the verges and the edges of the road. Both of these matters remain to be resolved.

Residents have complained on several occasions regarding speeding traffic in School Road. The Parish Council has responded by paying Warwickshire CC to carry out a "Speedaware" campaign and also by securing this issue as a police priority for the first three months of 2013. Although it has been identified that there is a problem, albeit not a major one, there is not much more that the Council can do and it rests with all drivers living in the village to keep strictly to the speed limit at all times.

The flower display contract was extended last year to cover the Jubilee period and so was due for re-tendering this year. Public Notices were posted in the Stratford Herald and the Evesham Journal and five contractors requested tender documents and these were duly dispatched. In the event, only one contractor returned a valid tender. The one tender received was compliant in all respects and the Council agreed to accept this offer from Limebridge Rural Services Ltd. at its meeting in March.

Parking at Dunnington School remains a problem. In spite of an assertion by our County Councillor that the problem has been solved we still have parents delivering their children parking in a most dangerous manner close to the crossroads with the possibility of a serious accident ever present.

Relatives of former Cllr. Maureen Edmunds pressed the Council regarding the flower bed opposite the primary school which had been removed. A magnolia plant together with a small plaque was moved to the Churchyard.

PLAYING FIELD

The play areas at the field are inspected every week and the Council is grateful to Cllr. Quiney for performing this task so assiduously throughout the year. In addition, an independent inspection is made on an annual basis and this year it was found that the see saw had reached the end of its useful life. Council decided to replace this item and we now have a gleaming new see saw for children to play on.

The Council were approached by a local group wishing to set up a football team and joint efforts between the new club and the Council resulted in regular matches being played on the field. However, this initiative only served to prove the inadequacies of the playing field and the club now use a pitch in Harvington. The pitch occupied most of the area of the field, there are no changing facilities, and the lack of parking led to cars being left throughout School Avenue and Priors Grange.

During the year, the District Council offered to sell the access to the field to the Parish Council. However, on taking legal advice, it became apparent that the Parish has all the rights of access it needs and the conditions imposed by the District Council were considered too onerous.

ALLOTMENTS

The year has been a difficult one for allotment holders due to the extreme weather. Maybe 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 has not been much to report regarding the right of way this year. A new gate was installed on AL11 near the Scout Hut and consideration was given to additional footpaths opposite the shop and through Slatters Farm. Both of these suggestions were dropped when the company farming the land raised objections. Much of the work improving and maintaining the footpaths in the parish is carried out on a completely voluntary basis by Mr Don Penn and the Council is extremely grateful to him for all his efforts.

JUBILEE

The Jubilee Event was well attended and enjoyed by all despite the weather which was not kind. Over the lunch time there were around 300 people enjoying the Pig Roast, about 80 children enjoyed the Tea Party later in the afternoon and the evening event attracted around 200 people who witnessed a superb firework display to end the evening, along with many more residents watching and enjoying from the comfort of their own homes. Many of the committee members had received lots of compliments and congratulations from very happy villagers for putting on such a wonderful event. The only disappointment was that the Family Pentathlon Event had to be postponed. All the costs of the event were covered by most generous sponsorship from businesses and individuals in the parish and the Council is most grateful for that support. The Council is particularly grateful to Karen Littleford and Tom Pearsall and the other members of the organising committee for their sterling efforts in providing such an excellent event.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Council has published three Newsletters during the year and these have been delivered to every household in the parish. The Clerk also circulates relevant information to a list of residents by e-mail. This service is open to everyone with an e-mail address and all they need to do is to mail the Clerk and request their name be added to the list. The current website was re-launched in 2008 and a major re-design will be carried out next year. The Council is very grateful to former Councillor Liam Maude for his continuing support for this project.

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 Girlguiding groups; Rainbows, Brownies, and Guides. The only major item of maintenance has been the installation of new emergency steps at the rear of the building.

SALFORD PRIORS PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Parish Council was concerned to hear that funding was being reduced due to a slight fall in pupil numbers. In response, the Council wrote to the Chief Executive at Warwickshire CC to express its concerns. The Council will expect any new development in the parish to be family homes that will support the ongoing viability of the school.

FINANCE

Review of expenditure 2012 – 2013 (Excludes VAT)

Total income during 2012 – 2013 was £ 51207.75

The main items of income were:

Precept	47000.00
Bank Interest	25.23
SDC Mowing grant	1236.44
Allotments	301.00
TOPs and Jubilee Sponsorship	2645.08

Total expenditure during 2012 – 2013 was £ 44705.54

The main items of expenditure were:

Amenities and Environment, includes Mowing, Planters, Maintenance and Allotments	8562.19
Communications, includes Newsletters and Website	420.00
Highways, includes Footway lighting, Signs, and Public Rights of Way	1789.82
Finance, includes Donations and expenditure for the Jubilee Celebrations	6874.35
Strategic Expenditure, includes TOPs expenditure	1775.61
Council, includes Staff salaries, Tax and NI, General Administration, and Insurance	16227.71
Council Projects, includes Bus Shelter, Election Expenses, New see-saw, Jubilee portrait, and Lengthsman.	9055.86

Donations made

During the year the Parish Council made donations as follows:

Bidford Community Library	1000.00
Kidney Research UK	150.00
Alcester Alzheimer Cafe	150.00
Salford Priors Royal British Legion	100.00
Stratford Citizens Advice Bureau	250.00

Precept for 2013 - 2014

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 this total since April 2010 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. The rules regarding the Precept have been changed with £6000 of the total amount being 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would express my appreciation for the work of departing councillors Wolfe, Maude, and Robinson. Tony Wolfe was elected to the Council in 2004 and served with distinction for eight years and was responsible for producing the award winning Newsletter during his period of office. Liam Maude and Lawrence Robinson both served for just a short time but their contributions are much appreciated.

Cllr. John Stedman
4th. April 2013