

Preston Brook Parish Council

MINUTES OF PRESTON BROOK ORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT 8:30PM ON TUESDAY 25 JUNE 2024 AT PRESTON BROOK VILLAGE HALL, SANDY LANE, PRESTON BROOK, CHESHIRE, WA7 3AW.

Members Present:

A Price, J Walton, C Murray, K Dainty, M Marlow, L Sanders.

Also Present:

Luke Trevaskis - Proper Officer, and 5 members of the public.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declarations

None.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the prior meeting were approved.

4. Co-Option

Peter Bolton was duly elected as a councillor.

5. Police

Members noted that there had not been a report received from the Police.

6. Public Realm

It was noted that a sum of £3K had been allocated for open space improvement works.

Members agreed to each take an area within the parish, to identify any public realm maintenance works that could be undertaken within budget. Members identified the below areas of responsibility.

Gorsewell Lane - Cllr C Murray
Bridgewater Grange - Cllr M Marlow
Aston Green - Cllr L Sanders
Canalside - Cllr K Dainty
Preston on the Hill - Cllr J Walton

The Council resolved to allocate a sum of £1,625 for this annual year to undertake maintenance work to the Bridgewater Grange area of the parish. It was agreed to reimburse

the green bin licence for residents of Bridgewater Grange (for this financial year only), noting that future requests should be made in writing prior to the purchase.

7. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were approved.

8. Financial Risk Management Scheme

The Financial Risk Management was approved.

9. Finance

The Council approved the end of year accounts for FY2324.

The Council approved the end of year bank reconciliation for FY2324.

The Council considered and approved Section 1 and Section 2 of the AGAR for FY2324, agreeing for both to be signed by the Chairman and Proper Officer (noting the signature would be redacted on the website to comply with the GDPR).

The Council approved the dates for the Notice of Elector's Rights to view the FY2324 accounts.

10.Planning

The Council considered the revisions to the Planning Application 22/00203/FUL and agreed to engage the same consultant who drafted the original objection at a cost of £3,000.00.

The Council agreed to delegate liaison with the planning consultant to the Proper Officer to consider the remaining concerns of the Parish, including (but not limited to) the waste management plan, use of materials, the effect on the canal and heritage. The Council also reiterated in the strongest possible terms the will of the people to see as much of, if not all, the S106 monies, or other related development fees, be retained on improvements within the Parish that local people would benefit from. Members were strongly against the idea of monies secured from parish developments funding projects elsewhere in the Borough. The Proper Officer agreed to consider how best to approach Halton BC regarding this.

Concerns were expressed by members regarding the fact that Preston Brook Parish Council had not been informed of the updates to the aforementioned application, thereby the Parish seemingly being denied the opportunity to consider the updated documents and fulfil its role as a statutory consultee. It was felt that this lack of communication undermined the Council's ability to represent the interests and concerns of our residents effectively, and the Council requested that the Proper Officer write to Halton Borough Council's planning department to complain.

11. Ward Councillor Report - none received.

12. Conservation Status / Neighbourhood Plan - it was noted that some further evidence was expected to be received by Cllr Dainty in the coming months which should conclude this parcel of work. Members noted, as agreed, that a payment of 60% of the final invoices for this work had been paid.

13. ChALC AGM - the Council noted that the Annual Meeting of ChALC provides an opportunity for members to discuss and canvass support on issues that are important to them. The Council considered recent events that had arisen, and its objectives to achieve wider, and more equitable, representation and governance of ChALC. After discussions regarding the wording of each motion, the Council agreed to submit four motions for discussion at the AGM. A brief summary of each motion is detailed below.

Motion 1 - This meeting calls upon the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) to persistently lobby Halton Borough Council and Warrington Borough Council until a frequent and consistent dialogue is established. This dialogue must actively support the parish councils within their boundaries, with regular monthly engagements and updates provided to ChALC for inclusion in its bulletins.

Motion 2 - This motion calls upon this General Meeting to resolve an amendment to the Constitution of the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) to ensure equitable representation on the Executive Board. Specifically, it mandates that at least one of the twelve individuals nominated by Local Councils to sit on the Executive Board must be selected from membership within the administrative boundary of Halton Borough Council, and at least one must be selected from membership within the administrative boundary of Warrington Borough Council.

Motion 3 - This meeting calls upon the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) to conduct a comprehensive survey among all local councils to assess the demographic composition of councillors representing our communities. This report will highlight any underrepresented demographic groups within the local council sector, providing crucial insights for ChALC to address disparities and enhance inclusive representation.

Motion 4 - This motion calls upon this General Meeting to resolve that any policy or protocol that concentrates undue authority in the hands of one member is considered at odds with the Constitution and void.

14. Next Meetings

It was noted that the next meetings of the Council would be held on:

Tuesday 23 July 2024 at 8.30pm
Tuesday 24 September 2024 at 8.30pm
Tuesday 22 October 2024 at 8.30pm
Tuesday 26 November 2024 at 8.30pm

15. Public Forum

BRIDGEWATER GRANGE

A resident reported that their children had previously been asked to stop playing on Bridgewater Grange Green by local residents maintaining the ground. The resident expressed a view that they did not agree with the majority of the budget being spent in such small area, and that more people should have a say. The resident was advised that some money has also been allocated to the entrance of Bridgewater Grange (not just the green), and that planters would soon be installed.

BRIDGEWATER GRANGE HORSE CHESTNUT TREE

A resident express concern regarding the proposed works that were required to be undertaken to the tree. The resident understood that prior tree surveys had given the tree an adequate bill of health. The resident was advised of the outcome of the two most recent tree surveys, undertaken by two separate arboriculturists as detailed below.

Survey undertaken by Kevin Feeney on 9.11.23 (Frodsham Tree Solutions):

Height 18m. Multiple nails on main stem at 2m. Main stem forks at 3m with rot visible, rot extends down main stem to ground level using sounding mallet. Bleeding canker on main stem. Previously crown lifted to 8m. Also had crown reduction in past with no signs of recovery. Tree in general state of decline. DBH 0.91m. Fell to ground level. Urgent.

Survey undertaken by R Rainford on 5.8.21 (Rainfords Tree Care):

Sounding using a nylon hammer exhibited signs of possible decay on the Southwest basal area. The stem breaks into two even limbs at 2.5m, on the top and tension side of both limbs is a moderate to significant size cavity which has filled with detritus, it was not possible to ascertain the depth of this cavity. The material loss present was complemented by some good wound wood ribs, however due to the reduced vigour and low ability of the species to compartmentalise decay, there were signs of a hazard beam crack which had formed in the North stem, the more heavily decayed of the two.

Some adaptation to the crack was visible, however this is not expected to improve or increase at a rate which would reduce the failure risk.

The upper canopy of the North stem was noted to be heavily dying back, upon investigations of the timescale of this through google street view, a sparse canopy can be noted as far back as 2011, suggesting there was a change some years before the images were taken, such as possible root compaction, removal or raised soil levels. This die back is slowly progressing, with the tree now exhibiting stag heading from the increasing level of decline in the upper canopy.

Based on the possibility of decay at the base of the tree and the extent of the cavity on the base of the main scaffold limbs, further investigation is warranted, the cavity on the limbs can

be investigated using either a climbing inspection or the use of advanced techniques, such as an acoustic tomograph to produce an accurate assessment of the remaining wood. The stem areas with possible decay can also be inspected with Sonic tomography to determine levels of decay and assist in further management decisions.

This tree is in a prominent location and is exhibiting signs of stress and decline, to preserve its amenity value and to reduce the risk it poses to its vicinity, a moderate reduction is required to ensure this tree can support itself and reduce the possibility of a catastrophic failure.

50TH HBC ANNIVERSARY PLATE

A representative of the Village Hall presented the Council with a decorated plate from the Pre-School to mark the 50th Anniversary of Halton Borough Council.

PRESTON BROOK VILLAGE HALL

A representative of the Village Hall advised the Council that there is a reluctance among the village hall committee to pursue a transfer of the trust deed to the Council due to concerns that the building could be demolished, rendering it unusable for a period of time. The representative stated that while the Village Hall Committee does not wish to transfer the deed of trust, they would like the Council to fund a replacement floor, estimated to cost approximately £15,000.

The Council outlined the benefits of being the sole trustee, including ensuring the trust deed's future-proofing for legacy planning, maintaining consistent stewardship, and removing liability from individual trustees. Members noted that if the Council is expected to fund repair and improvement works, it would be more logical for the Council to have jurisdiction over the asset. This would open up wider access to funding that the committee may not currently be utilising. It was also highlighted that the current committee had not finalised legal processes and charitable structure changes in recent years, which is their legal obligation. The Council, as the most local government body, would be better positioned to ensure better governance of the asset for its future use.

The Council also addressed the committee's fears of rebuilding by noting that the hall will eventually require essential repairs and maintenance in any event. If the hall is unusable for a period of time, a portacabin could be hired for 6-12 months and installed in the car park to ensure that essential services continue while a new multi-purpose community facility is built.

Members expressed disappointment at not receiving official written communication from the Village Hall Committee despite several attempts to engage. The Council reaffirmed its position that if there is no willingness to cooperate with the transfer of the asset, the budgeted money could be allocated elsewhere to projects with stronger community support, such as public realm work in the parish.

Signed as a true record

.....
Chairperson