

# **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 11 MARCH 2019**

## **Chairman's Report**

I am pleased to be able to give this Annual Parish Meeting my Pontesbury Parish Council Chairman's report. It will give a brief overview of the years' activities. Everything covered is reported in greater detail in both the newsletter and Parish Council website.

This report unfortunately begins with the sad loss of two of our Councillors David Ryder and Sue Picken, both hard working, well respected councillors who were committed to working within our community. Our thoughts have been very much with their family and friends .

We are fortunate to have Cllr Nick Hignett and Cllr Roger Evans representing us as Shropshire and Parish Councillors. They are both committed and approachable and I am sure you will all join me in thanking them for the work they do in our community. We were pleased to have Councillor Doug Jones join us as a parish councillor this year and we are currently looking for another candidate to co-opt at our April meeting.

We are very fortunate to have a strong team of committed councillors who all share the same ideology of working for our community. The role is now more time consuming and their commitment is, I am sure, appreciated by the community as well as by myself. We have a wealth of local groups and many members of the Parish Council are involved in them and able to listen to community concerns and when necessary raise them with the Parish Council. I would also like to thank the members of the community who attend our Monday night planning and full council meetings and the many individuals who bring issues within the parish to our attention.

May I take this opportunity to thank my vice chair, Cllr John Pritchard, for his continued support. This is the fourth year with us both in our respective roles and I appreciate being able to have the opportunity to discuss issues and tap into, I believe, approaching fifty years' experience!!!

The Parish Council representatives have continued to attend meetings on your behalf. Examples include The Local Joint Committee Meetings, Shropshire Association of Local Councils and the Town and Parish Council Forums. We are always keen to have representatives attend and report back to the Parish Council ensuring we are well informed and up to date with policies and developments that can affect our community.

### **Finance**

The Parish Council always strives to be prudent with public funds however there are a number of large projects planned for the next eighteen months including setting up the community hub building, and replacing our 113 SOX streetlights with LED lamps. We have also budgeted for essential maintenance on the play equipment and trees which the Parish Council are responsible for. This leads me to the Parish Council precept (the council tax rate set by the Parish Council) which was set at £80,000 for 2019-20. This is an approximate increase of 69pence per month, £8.30 per annum, (for an average band D house.)

Grants have been awarded this year for;

- Sports Association for CCTV upgrade
- Pontesbury Broadplace (contribution to their Broadband costs)
- Cruckton Village Hall for a new noticeboard
- Silent Soldier Silhouette
- The upkeep of Poles Coppice

### **Planning**

The Parish Council Planning Committee have had another busy year and I would like to thank all the members for their contribution to the meetings. Whilst the Parish Council are

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only consultees - not the decision makers, our views are taken into consideration by the Planning officers. We look at all applications based on material planning considerations, but are very aware planning can be an emotive and stressful time for those concerned. Cllr Allan Hodges balances the role of Chairman of the Planning Committee with expert knowledge and empathy for those present. We are very fortunate to have his continued support to undertake this time-consuming role. I am sure you will join me in expressing our thanks, considering the extra work he has undertaken with the Neighbourhood Plan, more on this in a moment. May I also take this opportunity to thank Cllr Neville Lewis for his expertise on the applications for work to trees with Tree Preservation Orders. His knowledge and advice are greatly appreciated by the Planning Committee.

The partial review of the Local Plan is currently taking place and in the consultation document it is proposed we will be classified as a hub which we as a Parish Council strongly support. Pontesbury was previously linked with Minsterley as market towns, however it is now proposed that in planning terms will be classified as a "hub". This links in with our decision to undertake a Pontesbury Parish neighbourhood plan. The Local Plan consultation is proposing to take the plan to 2036. For Pontesbury there is shown an amendment to the development boundary to accommodate limited future growth for development. A public meeting with Shropshire Council planners to discuss the review process was held at Habberley Village Hall and was well attended.

The success of what we as a parish council can achieve relies on us working successfully in partnership with local residents, businesses and other organisations. I would like to give you a flavour of some of these partnership projects.

**The Pontesbury Parish Neighbourhood plan** involves creating a strategy for development in the local community and is a way of helping local communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live and work. It is a community-led process to create a shared vision for our neighbourhood. In Pontesbury the process is led by a Steering Group which has a good mix of local people working in partnership with parish councillors. At this stage of the plan we are involved in consulting local residents on what they like about living in the area, what they wish to protect and what changes they would like to see. This process has involved a great deal of time and commitment by the Steering Group, and is ably chaired by Cllr Allan Hodges. A big thank you to you all. There will be a public meeting about the plan later in spring and we hope many local residents will come along to find out more.

### **Hall Bank development and the Community Hub building**

This time last year we were looking at the planning application for the proposed development of the land at Hall Bank, this application was passed on 10 September 2018 and development is well under way on the site. We are aware of the public concerns about the safety of pedestrians affected by the increased traffic and We are in discussions with Shropshire Council Highways department (and their consultants WSP) about proposals particularly for the junction at the bottom of Hall Bank.

The Parish Council has welcomed the offer from the Shropshire Homes to build a community hub building which will benefit the local community. The building is moving forward rapidly and meets the Parish Council aspirations to ensure long term sustainability for services to the local community. Pontesbury Library is vulnerable in its present location on Mary Webb Academy land. We have been working with Shropshire Library Service and Friends of Pontesbury Library to safeguard the future of this vital community asset. The proposal to move the library to the community hub building will go before Shropshire Council Cabinet in April. Feedback from the public consultation on moving the library to the new hub building was positive and there were many suggestions of activities/services local residents

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would like to see provided through the hub. We are working to set up a Community Hub Working Group who will work alongside many local organisations including Friends of Pontesbury Library, to take this project forward. This joined up approach will provide a vibrant space for the whole community to use. We are looking for active volunteers that would like to get involved in this project, so please contact the Clerk if you are interested.

### **Flood Alleviation**

Another example of successful partnership working is the team led by Cllr Nick Hignett who are looking into how to reduce the risk of the flooding in the village such as we saw last June. A thorough investigation has been carried out and the report recommendations are currently being examined by Pontesbury Parish Council, Shropshire Council officers along with Shropshire Rural Homes. My thanks go to the group of parish councillors and local residents who worked hard to clear out the culvert at the bottom of Brookside, which had been one factor contributing to the flooding.

The Police's Safer Neighbourhood Team continues to be based in Pontesbury. We are fortunate that we have an excellent relationship with the local Police team. PC Ross Cookson and his colleague PCSO Joe Bradley are both active within our community and always available to discuss local issues and work with our Shropshire councillors and the Parish Council. We would like to thank the whole team for all their hard work in maintaining the low levels of crime that we enjoy locally.

We now have a defibrillator located on the outside wall of the public toilets which was provided through working with the Rea Valley First Responders. Training has been provided to a team of volunteers, however we always need more volunteers, so please contact the clerk for details if you would like to get involved.

We are continuing to make a financial contribution to support Shropshire Council to continue managing **Poles Coppice**. We had a very enjoyable site visit to this local area of great botanical value & interest. Our thanks go to the P3 group who have volunteered to help with the practical work involved in managing the site such as improving fencing and pathways through the coppice.

Despite the digital world in which we live the **Pontesbury Newsletter** continues to be the main source for local information and is paramount in getting information into the public domain. Our professional editor Christine Lawrie prepares it for printing liaising with local groups and advertisers. We have increased our print run, Once printed these are then prepared into bundles ready for our volunteer deliverers. A big thank you to Jonathan Walton and Christine Day the great team of volunteers, who ensure the newsletter are distributed throughout the Parish.

I represent the Parish Council on the **Dementia Awareness Alliance** locally. The alliance are working hard to raise the awareness locally of residents, businesses and organisations about living with dementia and we would like to see Pontesbury become a Dementia Friendly village.

An abiding memory of the year is the many local people that turned out on Remembrance Sunday to gather together to commemorate the end of WW1, and the ongoing reminder in the village through the presence of the **Silent Soldier Silhouette**.

I would also like to mention the **Parish Clerk** whose work load continues to grow. For a Parish of the size of Pontesbury it is now virtually a full-time role. Last year we were delighted to welcome Mrs Debbie Marais who came with a wealth of relevant experience. I'm sure you would wish me to thank Debbie for her support for the Parish Council, her

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integrity, hard work and commitment to the role and not least in helping me to write this report, ensuring I don't miss out any of the many important activities we have been involved in this year.

I will finish my report by highlighting what I believe is our strength - a team of skilled councillors who work very hard to serve the community. I trust this will continue to be the case. Just as important is a community that is well informed and actively supports local groups and the many individuals among the community that do their bit i.e. delivering the very successful village newsletter and keeping the Parish free of litter - the unsung heroes. Thank you to you all and I believe we are in a strong position to jointly face the challenges that lie ahead.