

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 9 MARCH 2020 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 a very busy years' activities. Everything covered is reported in greater detail in both the newsletter and Parish Council website.

I am pleased to report that the Parish Council is covered in all our wards. We had vacancies this time last year and Cllr Paul Bradbury/Cllr Doug Jones were co-opted in February and April 2019 and have become valued members of our team.

We are fortunate to have Cllr Nick Hignett and Cllr Roger Evans representing us as Shropshire and Parish Councillors. They are both committed, very hard working and approachable and I am sure you will all join me in thanking them for the work they do in our community and particularly for our Parish Council. We are very fortunate to have such a strong team of 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 with them and are 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 fifth year with us both in our respective roles and I appreciate being able to have the opportunity to discuss issues and tap into, many years' experience.

The Pavilion

The new community hub building (The Pavilion) now officially belongs to the Parish Council. A big thank you to Shropshire Homes for providing it for the community. The building will be open to the public in the next few weeks and we will be having a formal opening later in the year. We as a Parish Council have taken on the running of the building which is a major project. We are currently forming a management group for the building and are calling on local organisations including Friends of Pontesbury Library, to help to take this project forward. This joined up approach will provide a vibrant space for the whole community to use. We also have a wonderful outside space at The Pavilion – a patio area with furniture kindly donated by the Co-op. The Pavilion as a community building, will be a valuable asset to community life in Pontesbury Parish and the wider Rea Valley area. A big thank you to all on the working groups who have helped to set up this project, including Friends of Pontesbury Library, Greg from Shroptech, parish & Shropshire councillors from Pontesbury and the wider Rea Valley area. I also wish to record the pivotal role our clerk has taken in this project and her experience and help has proved invaluable. We have also just appointed a building assistant (Anna Lawson) to work alongside Debbie at the new hub to keep things running smoothly and to help to promote the many community activities which will take place in the building.

Finance

The Parish Council always strives to be prudent with public funds however there are a number of large projects which we advised on last year and are now developing;

- Setting up the community hub building
- Replacing sox streetlights with led (Thank you to Cllrs Gregory, Evans, Morris, Heywood for their help on this complex project)
- A tree survey and we are working on the recommendations within the report
- We have also budgeted for essential maintenance on the play equipment
- We will be reviewing the public toilets over the next 18 months

All these larger projects are on top of the normal running costs of the Parish Council. This leads me to the Parish Council precept (the council tax rate set by the Parish Council) which was set at £100,000 for 2020/2021 which is an approximate increase of 98pence per month, £11.71 per annum, (for an average band D house.) We applied successfully for an Environmental Maintenance grant in 2019-20 to carry out work on pavements and verges around the parish and we have also awarded grants this year to;

- The Sports association
- The upkeep of Poles Coppice ,
- Notice boards at Cruckton village hall, Pound Lane, and Plealey
- Defibrillator boxes for two new defibrillators at Cruckton and The Pavilion
- Remembrance wreath

Thank you to Cllr P Heywood for his help with internal checking of finances.

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 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. A big thank you as well to Cllr B Morris for his many year's contribution to the Planning Committee.

The partial review of the Local Plan is still 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 town. This links in with our decision to undertake a Pontesbury Parish neighbourhood plan. The Local Plan consultation is proposing now to take the plan to 2038. For Pontesbury there is shown an amendment to the development boundary to accommodate limited future growth for development approximately 40 houses with a further 22 in windfall or exception sites.

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. We have been consulting with 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, which is ably chaired by Cllr Allan Hodges. A big thank you to you all. There was a public meeting about the plan and many local residents came along to find out greater detail about the whole process involved, it is expected the draft plan will be completed later in the year.

The Pontesbury Right Home Right Place survey ran for six weeks and we received the results in February this is a Shropshire Council led initiative to help identify housing needs and also have a say in the housing needs of the future and the results will be taken into consideration in our developing Neighbourhood Plan. Thank you to everyone locally who completed the survey.

Hall Bank

Development is well under way and despite concerns about the closure of Hall Bank late October to Early November, there was a minimum amount of disruption due to the close working of Shropshire Homes, Highways and the Parish Council. We are working with Shropshire Council Highways department (and their consultants WSP) looking at proposals for the junctions at the bottom and top of Hall Bank. The parish council have been consulted on the provisional plans and are awaiting to see further proposals. We identified pedestrian safety as a priority at the outline planning stage for the development at Hall Bank and we hope to see these improvements in place during 2020.

Pontesbury Library

I reported last year the library was 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 went out to consultation, including a public meeting which many attended. The move was confirmed by Shropshire Council Cabinet on 1st May 2019.

Taking this project forward has been time consuming and a big thanks to everyone who has been committed to making it a success. We look forward to seeing the newly fitted out library open for business shortly from The Pavilion.

The three defibrillators in the parish have been provided through working with the Rea Valley First Responders who donated all three. Thank you to Cllr C Sandells for his

contribution towards the box for the defibrillator at Cruckton. The fitting of the two new defibrillators at Cruckton Village Hall and the Pavilion will be accompanied by British Heart Foundation certified first-aid training sessions with the Rea Valley First Responders during March, so please contact the clerk for details if you wish to take part in this important training.

We are continuing to make a financial contribution to support Shropshire Council to manage Poles Coppice. 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 in this botanically important reserve on our doorstep. Whilst mentioning The P3 group they have also been actively involved in the upgrading the public footpath at the bottom of hall bank and we are sure you will join us in thanking the team, Cllr R Martinali and Shropshire Council Rights of Way officer, David Hardwick for making this path more usable in all weathers.

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.

A new partnership project beginning in 2020 is the Climate Change Emergency group. The Parish Council announced in December their support for the declaration of a climate emergency. The parish council is working alongside residents to draw up an action plan in pursuit of ensuring the council and parish are carbon neutral by 2030. The first meeting of the Climate Change Emergency group took place last Thursday and a start has been made, with some interesting ideas and proposed projects.

We recently worked with CPRE to carry out a green clean in Pontesbury and Minsterley. Thank you to Cllr S Lockwood and Cllr Doug Jones for their help in organising this.

Police

Another very important partnership for the parish council is with the Safer Neighbourhood Team. They continue to be based in Pontesbury and will shortly move to an office based in The Pavilion. 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 are working with the police on tackling the speeding issues in the village. We are pleased to see that the community speedwatch team have recently been active in the village. We have raised our support for a 20mph through the village with Shropshire Council. This and other issues were raised at the recent visit of our Police and Crime commissioner and one of the suggestions to him which we hope will be taken forward. Cllr Hignett has been working with the Police and the local schools to find a solution to the problems of traffic and parking outside the schools at each end of the day.

Dog fouling in the village remains a problem and we have been working with Cllr Bradbury/Lockwood and the Shropshire Council Dog warden to put up more signs in the most affected areas.

The Parish Council are also active consultees on many issues affecting the parish such as rural transport, youth funding, BT phone removal and the updated Pontesbury and Minsterley Place Plan to name but a few.

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 this year on welcoming the new residents to Hall Bank and other local developments. Once printed the newsletters are then prepared into bundles ready for our volunteer deliverers. A big thank you to Jonathan Walton and Christine Day and the great team of volunteers, who ensure the newsletter are distributed throughout the Parish.

I would also like to mention the hard work by the Parish Clerk. We are delighted that Debbie has recently agreed to go full time . The increase in hours reflects the work-load and responsibility that running such a busy Parish involves.

I am sure the rest of the Parish Councillors and public as well would join me in acknowledging Debbie's integrity, hard work and commitment to the role particularly in the last year which has involved great demands on her time as I mentioned in my report on the new community hub. Also 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, hard-working, committed councillors and a professional clerk, who work very hard to serve their local 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.