

**NOTES FROM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
PONTESBURY PUBLIC HALL
MONDAY 11th MARCH 2019, 7.30PM**

PRESENT: Cllr D Fletcher (Chairman) Cllr J Pritchard (Vice-chairman), Cllr R Evans & Cllr N Hignett (also Shropshire Councillors), Cllr D Gregory, Cllr A Hodges, Cllr R Martinali, Cllr S Lockwood, Cllr Peter Heywood, Cllr C Robinson, Cllr B Morris, Cllr C Sandells and Cllr D Jones

Four members of the public were present.

APM 1/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr N Lewis.

APM 2/19 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Cllr D Fletcher, Chairman of Pontesbury Parish Council presided at the meeting and welcomed all present.

APM 3/19 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held 12th March 2018 were approved and signed.

APM 4/19 SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

Cllr Roger Evans gave the following report:

This has been yet another eventful year with the next few years looking to be the same together with an increasing number of challenges facing Shropshire Council. These are mainly financial and how to deliver the services that residents want and need within the financial resources available to the council.

In the early part of the year we heard of one county council that is going to be replaced by two unitary councils due to their financial difficulties. Several well-informed people are also saying to me that a few other councils are also having problems balancing their budgets. Shropshire being a unitary council already is in a little better position but as already stated there are some very challenging years ahead of us.

We are all relying on a much better settlement in future years as a result of the so-called Fair Funding Formula revision. London Boroughs for example get far more money from the government than we do in rural shire authorities like Shropshire.

However, the latest reports for this current year show Shropshire Council is expected to have overspent its budget by around £72,000. This is after £6.8m was saved by the Chief Executive imposing an emergency recruitment freeze from September and a procurement freeze from December. Around £3.3m or 21% of the proposed cuts or savings agreed in February 2018 were not achieved and hence the need for the Chief Executives emergency actions. Also, the Digital Transformation Savings which were due to deliver £10m of savings are now expected to deliver around £1.9m savings by the end of March 2020.

A Council Peer Review was carried out during 2018 and they are due to come back and review any changes later this year. A review of salaries was also carried out in 2018 with senior officers receiving substantial increases. A new Corporate Plan has been produced. For this next financial year cuts of around £18.5m were proposed and supported by the majority of councillors last week. Many details of what these cuts will involve have not yet been published, however it was shown that in outlines these would include cuts of;

- £2.2 m in adult services
- £861k cut in childrens services. This involves making approx. £717k cut in the transport provision for young people. In a paper presented last week this will mean the cost of the travel card for those over 16 whose parents are on a low income, being raised from the present £142.50 to just over £437, an increase of almost 300%. Increases in travel charges to others including very young nursery children are also being proposed.
- £1.5m in the waste collection and recycling services. This is being predicted as charging every household for their green waste bin
- £648k by making all the Community Enablement Team redundant
- £3.1m cut in the public health budget
- £405k in bus subsidies
- All concessionary fares on the P&R service being abolished
- £5m cut in expenditure of Highways team. This cut is also accompanied by an increase in income from car parking which it is shown is expected to raise an additional £400k
- Housing, both where they are built and the size of individual houses is of concern to all councillors. We need to build more houses that are affordable. Shropshire Council with unanimous support from all councillors is now in the process of setting up its own housing company with an initial starting capital of £10m

What all this means is that the precept that a Band D council tax payer will see an increase from £1688.62 to £1771.51. An increase of £82.89. This is the total sum they will need to pay and includes an increase in the Shropshire Council precept of 3.99% the maximum it is legally able to do plus the Parish, Fire Authority and Police charges. The Police precept of course includes an increase of just under 10%.

On top of these cuts Shropshire Council will need to use money from its reserves in order to balance the budget.

Other issues concerning Shropshire Council;

- The revised Local Plan is slowly making progress. At present its running around 12 months behind the original schedule due to lack of staff. The preferred site consultation has just closed. The result of this latest consultation is expected to be published towards the end of this year. The updated Local Plan is expected to be agreed late 2021.
- Several planning applications from residents have been turned down by officers ignoring requests from both the parish council and myself for them to be referred to the planning committee. A proposal to have this policy of non referral changes was the subject of a motion last week but the majority of councillors present, although no reasons were given, voted against it.

- Pontesbury Library, the Hall Bank development and the Community Hub. Work proceeds on all the different aspects of this development. Shropshire Council cabinet will be considering moving the library to the community hub in April. On behalf of everyone from SC, I would like to record how good it is to work with positive partners in delivering this project. Associated road alterations, improvements are in the process of being actively pursued.
- Problems of traffic and road safety around Pontesbury Schools are also being investigated and several meetings have recently been held.
- With the financial problems facing SC the contribution made by the PC towards Poles Coppice is also welcomed.
- Youth budget – the whole budget line has now been deleted but talks will take place later in the year looking at how youth provision can be provided in the future
- Environmental Grant – After pressure from members the EMG was reinstated but under very tight control of what it could be spent on. The application made by Pontesbury PC was not supported by SC officers. The reasons for this are being investigated
- Conversion of street lighting on our main county roads is still outstanding and the hope is that a business case will soon be agreed and the hoped for savings in energy costs achieved. I note that Telford and Wrekin council are now saving around £500,000 per year
- Shrewsbury town Centre. It has been confirmed that the intention is to keep the replacement swimming pool in the town centre and a feasibility study is taking place to look at this, together with a smaller pool at the Sports Centre. Work on Pride Hill has restarted using a different contractor. Four flat topped road humps will now be put in the town centre. The income SC is due to receive this year from the Shopping centres is below what was expected. A Big Town Plan has been produced for Shrewsbury detailing proposed improvements.
- Road Maintenance. SC have been given extra money to help pay for pothole repairs. Work is progressing, but I and others are aware of the continued frustration about the delays being experienced in having all the ones reported, being mended. A reorganisation of Highways Team is underway
- A grant towards building the NW relief road of around £51M was announced by the MP but this has yet to be officially confirmed. At a meeting last year with the MP both your SC Councillors raised Edgebold roundabout with him, expressing concerns about the number of near misses and accidents there
- The decision concerning the proposal by the Police and Crime Commissioner taking over the running of the Fire & Rescue Service has been referred to Judicial Review. The date for the hearing not yet announced
- How and what the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is to be used for in future are being looked at. The hope by councillors is that more of this can be spent locally for the benefit of our local communities than was originally planned

This parish is of course represented by two SC Councillors and we both wish to thank the PC, its Chairman and Clerk for the help and assistance they have provided to us during the last 12 months in enabling us to do the job we were elected for.

Finally Mr Chairman this is of course my report and any errors of omissions are mine.

APM 5/19

Local Police Team

PC Ross Cookson, representing the local Police team gave the following report.

In Pontesbury there are two members of staff (PC Cookson and PCSO Joe Bradley) who live locally and are very committed and interested in the area. PC Cookson reminded people that they can contact their local policing team at any time.

Crime statistics for Pontesbury remain low and are often to do with speeding traffic. There is to be a Rural Crime event which will be streaming live on the Police and Crime Commissioner's facebook on 24th June where people can ask questions and voice their concerns about rural crime.

PC Cookson also highlighted ways to protect your home and talked about smartwater and how it can help identify stolen goods. PC Cookson also encouraged the public to use social media and Neighbourhood Watch to link to police staff, a more informal but effective approach to sharing information about what is happening in your local area or concerns you may have.

Cllr Duncan Fletcher wished to thank PC Cookson and PCSO Bradley for the report, for giving up their time to come to the meeting, and for all the hard work they do in Pontesbury.

APM 6/19

PONTESBURY PARISH COUNCIL – 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 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 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 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.

APM 7/19 P3 FOOTPATH GROUP

Chris Hearn who is the Joint leader P3 group gave the following report:

Annual report for year ending December 2018

2018 saw yet another very busy year for the Pontesbury P3 Group with a regular group of volunteers attending throughout the year clocking up some 550 volunteer hours! As well as all the usual jobs of replacing broken stiles, footbridges, gates etc. a more diverse task was undertaken helping clear out the Pontesbury Brook following the flooding. This is a task that will be on the P3 list to be done on a "when needed" basis rather than after the flooding occurs. As mentioned in the previous year's report, many hours have been spent up in Poles Coppice during 2018. This will certainly continue during the coming year along with various Wild Life Trust projects on Pontesford Hill. Once the development at Hall Bank is finished the P3 will assist the Council in making the path down to the childrens play area more accessible and suitable for buggies etc. Having already six dedicated circular walks around Pontesbury and Minsterley, 2019 will see the group working on some circular walks over in the Westbury area with the help of a couple of local walkers keen to open up some currently unused paths.

APM 8/19 PARISH AND CHARITY ACCOUNTS

It was noted that the following accounts were on display:

- Pontesbury Parish Council
- Pontesbury Public Hall
- Pontesbury Charities

APM 9/19 PARISH VILLAGE HALLS

Cllr J Pritchard gave the following report for **Habberley Village Hall**:

The hall continues to thrive despite the difficulties some larger halls experience and retains a health bank balance. A hard working committee, able to draw on a wide range of expertise organise a varied programme of social events catered to suit most tastes. The bar-b-q and harvest supper continue to be highlights of the year but during the year a talk and practical demonstration by a taxidermist drew a large audience. Unfortunately there was no volunteer from the audience to get stuffed!

In recent times there has been a decline in external granting situation which has delayed some of the committee's ambitious projects but it is largely due to the generosity of

Pontesbury Parish Council and the Atherton Trust in the past that we have such a fine facility in a small rural community. Habberley does benefit from having a thriving local pub which attracts visitors to the hall as well as having a copious supply of books which are sold off to raise funds.

Continuity of committee membership is vital to keep things moving forward and in that regard we are well blessed and ably led by our longstanding Chairman Philip Duddleston. Planning ahead is essential especially if you are able to hold events which have proved popular – e.g. arrangements are in hand for Burns night 2020. The hall will shortly set up its own website to attract a wider audience to its events.

Cllr R Martinali gave a report for **Pontesbury Public Hall 2019:**

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen ,this report is for Pontesbury Public Hall. Lettings are again very high this year, two new classes ,Diabetics and Exercise both for elderly people sponsored by N.H.S.

Line Dancing and Childrens dancing classes also doing well, Pontesbury Players pantomime again attracting nearly 1.000 people from as far afield as Shewsbury and beyond. As Trustees we are aware that the hall is here for the benefit of Pontesbury people therefore volunteer groups with the same objective ei, Broadplace and the Library support group, are helped as follows ; Broadplace benefit from reduced letting fees and we sponsor the telephone landline to the Hall.

The Library support group can request use of the hall for money raising events F.O.C.

Information of activities in the hall can be found on the hall's notice board, the Village news letter or the Pontesbury Parish web site, pontesbury.infopublichallcallender.

Finally our audited accounts are on the table at the back of the hall

Cllr Charles Sandells gave the following report for **Cruckton Village Hall.**

The Hall still enjoys regular bookings from Lea Cross WI, The 55 Club and Cruckton Art Group. It has been a steady year regarding bookings but the Village Hall barely breaks even and has to delve into reserves for maintenance and any up-grading works. We are still working hard to make sure that the venue attracts more bookings to increase our income.

The Hall is in need of refurbishment in the long term to keep the facilities up to a standard comparable with other village halls in the local area and therefore achieve bookings and future revenue and we will be looking for sources of funding in the future.

Cllr Fletcher wished to congratulate everyone who is involved in providing these essential community facilities.

APM 10/19 PARISH BUSINESS – PUBLIC COMMENTS AND VIEWS

None.

APM 11/19 DATE OF THE NEXT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting was agreed as 9th March 2020.

There being no other business, that Chairman thanked everyone for their reports and for attending and closed the meeting.

Meeting ended at 8.21pm

Signed
Chairman of Parish Council

Date