

**NOTES FROM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
PONTESBURY PUBLIC HALL
MONDAY 8th MARCH 2021, 7PM on Zoom**

PRESENT: Cllr D Fletcher (Chairman), Cllr N Hignett, Cllr R Evans, Cllr R Martinali, Cllr A Hodges, Cllr, P Bradbury, Cllr N Lewis, Cllr S Lockwood, Cllr D Gregory and Cllr P Heywood

Eight members of the public were present.

APM 1/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr D Jones, Cllr J Pritchard, Cllr C Robinson, Cllr B Morris, Cllr C Sandells

APM 2/21 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

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

APM 3/21 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held 9th March 2020 were approved and signed.

APM 4/21 SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

Cllr Roger Evans gave the following report:

The Pontesbury Parish Area is represented by two Shropshire Councillors. Councillor Nick Hignett and myself. This report is prepared by me, Roger Evans and any errors or omissions are mine. The area I cover is largely north of Pontesbury Village. Councillor Hignett represents the main village, Habberley and areas to the south of the village. He is here tonight and available to answer questions concerning the area he represents.

It is good that both your Shropshire Councillors work together to try and help all our residents. Together with the Parish Council and thanks to many other volunteers we have hopefully managed to ensure residents during these last 12 months received the help they needed.

All meetings during the 12 months have of course been carried out using remote technology. Shropshire Council's preferred method is to use the "Teams" system. All meetings are now being recorded so can be listened to either live or after the meeting is finished.

Council Finances.

The Council Tax Precepts will shortly be delivered and for this Parish the payment for a Band D Property will be £1,954.36. This is the total and will include the Parish Council, Fire & Rescue, Police and Shropshire Council. Last year this was £1,849.21 so represents an increase of £105.21.

There is a hope that the much-delayed Fair Funding Formula will be announced during the next 12 months and increase the amount of grant that Government give the Shire Councils like Shropshire.

In a report being considered by the Shropshire Council Cabinet earlier today (Monday 8 March) officers state that they expect this year's budget to be overspent by just over £0.8M. this will be covered by use of monies from General Reserves. This will reduce the total of

General Reserves to £12.6M. The appropriate risk- based balance state they should be £19.2M.

The budget for the next Financial Year was agreed in a vote by the majority of councillors at the full council meeting held on 25th February. To achieve a balanced budget for next year this showed that there needs to be cuts of around £9M to be made.

The council does of course have around £170M in its Capital Reserves available for investment. This is held largely in cash at various banks and institutions all on very short-term conditions.

Coronavirus Update

During this last year, an exceptional year, one we hope never to see again a number of different actions needed to be taken.

Covid cases as publicised by Shropshire Council on 4 March shows that during the period 19 – 25 February in the SC area there were 322 new cases reported (a decrease of 106 or 24% on the previous week). 28 of these new cases relate to people over 70 years of age. This total equates to 99.6 cases per 100,000; for England the equivalent figure is 96.4 cases per 100,000; 30% of the new cases were from the Shrewsbury & Atcham area.

During this same period, 19 – 25 February a further 22 people died at our Shropshire Hospitals bringing the total number of deaths since March 2020 to 578.

The Council now has various dedicated telephone numbers providing help during this time. The master one if needed is 03456 789028.

Everyone is urged to continue taking the recommended safety precautions.

The Council has distributed over £125M to Shropshire businesses in the last 12 months. The government also recently announced another tranche of help to businesses. Shropshire Councils share of this is £6M and it is to be distributed to businesses hit by the current third lockdown.

Planning

The planning application to build the North-West Relief road has now been submitted. The date for this to be decided is at the end of May. The business case to support this project will not be published until near the end of this year. There are many objections to and various discussions took place the Council meeting last week. This was in the form of two amendments, one was to welcome its construction and the other was asking for it to be reviewed and the implications of the Governments Climate Change Strategy, its commitment to reduce carbon emissions and the likely reductions in traffic as more people work from home. The amendment welcoming it was passed by a majority of those present. Other issues to do with Climate Change were also discussed including a proposal asking the Council to back the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill (CEE) at present being debated and considered by Parliament. This was amended and supported by a majority referring this proposal for consideration by a committee.

The new updated Local Plan has now completed all its consultation stages. The last being what is called the Regulation 19 consultation. After many requests the date was for its finish was extended. There is now a cabinet meeting being held next Thursday (11th March) when it is expected the date when Council will be asked to finally agree it will be fixed for July 2021. If this is agreed at that meeting, then it will become a very real material consideration when any applications are considered. Before then it has very limited effect on any applications. The Plan will become the only plan which all applications will need to comply with after it has been considered after a public enquiry, organised and run by a Planning Inspector appointed by the appropriate Government Minister takes place and a report of this is made discussed and accepted at a future Shropshire Council meeting. This will be at

some time during 2022. The chairman refers to what development is proposed for the Pontesbury Parish area in his report. Outside of the main village the rest of the Parish is designated as open countryside. Included in the revised Local Plan are various other updates and one or two new policies.

Other issues which Shropshire Council have considered, and I feel may be of interest to residents include:

Big Town Plan. Support for this was agreed by the cabinet recently. The plan or vision includes scrapping the main bus station. All rural buses would then terminate at the nearest Park & Ride site. Passengers would then need to transfer and catch a P&R Bus to access the town centre. This would include all passengers using the buses that pass through Pontesbury. I have objected to this as have many others living in rural areas. Minsterley Motors have also objected to this proposal.

The cabinet have agreed that the replacement of the Quarry Swimming Pool would be built at the Sports village. A small pool would be built on the Quarry site. Again, I have objected to this.

Selling off the Shirehall site and transferring the main council offices to the Pride Hill Centre has been agreed by the Council. This new site is to be renamed the Civic Offices. I and a number of other councillors have objected to this proposal. There is at present a refusal to look at a number of alternatives.

The Government has recently informed Shropshire Council that it will give us a grant of £9.15M to help mend all the many potholes. It is hoped that Kier, the council's contractors will make better use of this money than in past years.

Discussions are at present being held between Councillor Hignett and officers concerning the recent flooding problems in the village. This also includes various road improvements that are needed.

Dog mess in the areas many of us walk along is on the increase and the Dog Warden has been asked to visit the area and, if needed, give out fines to the few who do not clear up the mess left by their dogs.

Requests for Quiet Lane signage in Pound Lane, a speed limit and HGV restrictions in Cruckton, speed reduction measures outside Hanwood School and help towards renewal of play equipment adjacent to that school are being progressed. It is hoped to use some of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money to pay for this.

Discussions are being held with the police and others looking at the installation of vehicle number plate recognition cameras. These will identify vehicles that are being driven at speeds in excess of the relevant speed limit. At present it is not anticipated the information will not be used for prosecution purposes. When installed they will be the first in Shropshire.

Broadband coverage is bad in a number of areas. The Government have made cashable vouchers available for some pre-selected rural areas. These vouchers can be used to help residents meet the cost of installing Fibre direct to each house. Residents in Plealey live in one of the selected areas and are at present negotiating with Open Reach for the installation of Fibre direct to each house in the village and the immediate surrounding area.

Finally, the new building called the Pavilion is an excellent example of working together and achieving an outcome for residents that many other communities see are envious of.

A question was raised about Shrewsbury bus station closing. Cllr Evans outlined the proposals for the bus station in the Big Town Plan. Minsterley Motors and Pontesbury Parish Council have written letters to Shrewsbury Town Council raising their concerns.

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. The 2019 and 2020 figures overall were very similar although the first lockdown had seen a slight lowering in crime levels.

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.

Councillors asked PC Cookson if the regular reporting could return to showing incidents parish by parish.

A question was asked about how easy it would be to get speed cameras into the smaller hamlets not just the bigger villages. PC Cookson said that this would be possible providing safe sites for the volunteers could be found.

A question was raised about County Lines, PC Cookson said that activity was monitored closely but as yet there was no particular problem in the Pontesbury area.

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 6/21 PONTESBURY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I am pleased to be able to give this Annual Parish Meeting, my Parish Council Chairman's report. I am going to start with how I finished my report last year, I quote:

"I will finish my report by highlighting what I believe is our strength - a team of skilled, hardworking, 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 e.g. 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."

Little did we know the magnitude of challenges to come, immense and unprecedented for most of us. The Covid virus has changed all of our lives and yet the communities within our parish have shown strength, great spirit and resolve, pulling together to overcome all the difficulties we have faced. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for the part you have played throughout the last year and in particular to Sharon Davies and Helen Tivnen who set up and ran the local foodshare scheme supporting at the peak 25 families each week and encouraged local people to mobilise and help; the many local volunteers who delivered essential food and prescriptions throughout the parish and looked out for people who were isolated; to all the businesses, organisations, neighbouring parish councils and individuals who donated food and money to the local efforts. What is great is that many people want to continue to volunteer and thanks to a team of local volunteers and Helen Tazewell (Community Care Coordinator) the Community Good Neighbours scheme has come into being which will continue to offer support to the community as we come out of the pandemic and beyond.

The world of Zoom meetings has taken over in the last year which has ensured that both the Parish Council and Planning meetings have been able to continue to allow essential parish council business to be carried out. It is interesting how quickly we have adapted to this way of communication. However communicating online can be tiring and for that reason I am keeping this year's report short. I look forward to meeting you all in person again at next year's Annual Parish Meeting. Everything covered is reported in greater detail in both the newsletter and on the Parish Council website.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Nick Hignett and Cllr Roger Evans who represent us as Shropshire and Parish Councillors. They are both committed, very hard working and approachable and I am grateful for all 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 complex and their commitment is, I am sure, appreciated by the community as well as by myself.

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 opening was scheduled for April 6th 2020 so we are still waiting for a date to officially open the whole building!

However, we are already seeing the benefits of the building from being used as a temporary home for the local foodbank at the beginning of the pandemic; providing a base from which the Community Good Neighbours scheme was formed as well as opening as a library albeit with social distancing and restricted numbers and for now just providing a click and collect service.

The work involved in taking this project to the point that the building is partially opened, has been exceptionally time consuming and big thank you to all who have been involved. We now have a steering group for the Pavilion and while there is a level of frustration of not being able to have the building open and fulfilling its potential as a vibrant cultural and support hub, our meetings continue and we look forward to putting in place those plans in the near future. The friends of Pontesbury Library continue to raise the profile of the library and fund-raise despite the difficult circumstances. They have adapted to the restrictions we have faced, providing the August Bank Holiday Treasure Hunt, the Christmas Tree trail and taking the Library Lottery online to ensure that fundraising continues. A separate report about their work will follow.

Finance

The Parish Council always strives to be prudent with public funds, however there are several large costly projects which we advised about last year, which have either been completed or are still being worked on. Our draft Strategic Plan (on the parish council website) which we hope to consult on in summer 2021 gives more details.

- Setting up the community hub building
- Replacing older style Sox streetlights with LED lights (complex project)
- A tree inspection survey has taken place and we are working on the recommendations within the report

- We had also budgeted for and undertaken essential maintenance in the play area.
- We will be reviewing the public toilets over the next 18 months and putting a refurbishment plan in place.

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 £142,000 for 2021/2022 which is an approximate increase of 59 pence per week (for an average band D house).

Grants have been awarded this year for:

- The upkeep of Poles Coppice
- Remembrance wreath
- Printing a local information leaflet for every household in the parish at the beginning of the March lockdown
- PPE for local COVID volunteers
- The local foodbank
- Community Good Neighbours Pontesbury and Rea Valley
- Feed the Birds Pontesbury and Minsterley
- Christmas lights for School Green
- Noticeboard for Plealey

Planning

The Parish Council Planning Committee have continued during the lockdown although there have been less applications and I would like to thank all the members for their contribution to the applications we have received.

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 . 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. May I also take this opportunity to thank Cllr Neville Lewis for his expertise on the applications for work on trees with Tree Preservation Orders. His knowledge and advice are very much appreciated.

The review of the Local Plan, has reached its last public consultation stage. The next step is to go to the full Shropshire Council for consideration and then onwards to the Planning Inspector. 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 a market town. The Local Plan consultation is to take the plan to 2038. For Pontesbury there is shown an amendment to the development boundary. This is to accommodate limited future growth for development with a site for approximately 40 houses, with a further 22 houses expected in windfall or exception sites.

Working in partnership

The success of what we as a parish council can achieve relies on us working successfully in partnership with residents, businesses, and other local and regional 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. Cllr Allan Hodges Chairs this group and has provided a separate report on our progress and there will be an opportunity to ask questions about the plan later.

The Hall Bank development is nearing completion and we have been working with Shropshire Council Highways department (and their consultants WSP) looking at improvements 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 have always identified pedestrian safety as a priority.

We have also been working with Shropshire Council Highways and Flooding Officer, and Shropshire Rural Housing to look at flood alleviation measures needed. We are awaiting a report which will look at medium and longer term measures, some of which will be incorporated into the works done on the Junction at the bottom of Hall Bank.

The Climate Emergency Action group is working hard in partnership with the Parish Council, supporting the declaration of a climate emergency and producing an action plan to ensure the council and parish are carbon neutral by 2030. Regular meetings and online talks have been taking place and the group continues to grow and develop. Liz Knowles who chairs this group has provided a report on the progress of the group and is happy to answer questions later.

The P3 group despite difficult circumstances have continued to help to develop the footpaths in the parish and I am sure we all wish to thank the volunteers for all their hard work, including Cllr Richard Martinali and Chris Hearn.

The relationship with our local Police team continues. We are fortunate that we have an excellent relationship with PC Ross Cookson and his colleague PCSO Joe Bradley. Both are very 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 along with the neighbouring parishes of Minsterley and Hanwood. We are pleased to see that the community speed watch team are active in the village. We have raised our support for a 20mph through the village with Shropshire Council. We have also been working to find a solution to the problems of traffic and parking outside the schools at each end of the day. Following discussions between the Police, Highways, schools and Councillors, yellow lines have been put down as a temporary measure, while a more permanent solution is considered.

We are also working with Minsterley Parish council on installing solar lighting along the cycleway linking the two villages.

Getting the newsletter out each month has been essential, passing on vital information and updates along with articles to lift our spirits. We have had to provide a mix of online and print versions during the pandemic and lockdowns, as restrictions have dictated. I'm sure you will all wish to thank our professional editor Christine Lawrie who works hard to prepare each interesting edition, liaising with local groups and advertisers. A big thank you to Jonathan Walton and Christine Day and the great team of volunteers, who ensure the newsletters are distributed throughout the Parish.

Elections

We will be having elections this May and I would like to thank all our Parish Councillors for the work they have put in during the last four years and hope they wish to continue supporting our Parish in their wards. May I take this opportunity to thank my Vice-Chair Cllr John Pritchard for his support during this period.

I am sure you will all want to join me in thanking our clerk Mrs Debbie Marais for her commitment during the Covid pandemic. I quote from the nomination that was sent to the Lady Lord Lieutenant Anna Turner

"I would like to nominate our Clerk Mrs Debbie Marais to be sent a thank you card for the exceptional work she has done for the Parish of Pontesbury liaising with Shropshire Council, community care workers, helping support volunteer groups, and helping to provide an information sheet to every household in the Parish. Debbie has worked tirelessly and has been instrumental in ensuring that through this most difficult time our community has received support at all levels".

Debbie has ensured the running of the Parish Council during a very difficult period in a professional and efficient manner, on top off issues raised with the pandemic. May I take this opportunity to thank her and also for her help in writing this report.

Finally, if I have missed out anyone or not reported a matter please accept my apologies. This has been a most difficult year and I am sure as a community as we emerge from this pandemic, we will maintain all the support and help for each other and a huge thank you to everyone over the last year. We look forward to re-connecting in person to celebrate a return to normality over the coming months.

Cllr Fletcher wished to add a thank you to:

- Mathew Mead (Shropshire Council Place Plan Officer) and Dianne Dorrell/Gail Power at Shropshire Association of Local Councils for all their help and support.
- Cllr P Bradbury for his COVID response work locally.
- Cllr D Jones for all his hard work on the cycleway

APM 7/21 P3 FOOTPATH GROUP

Report from Chris Hearn who is the Joint leader P3 group: The Pontesbury P3 have continued to work whenever possible over the last 12 months and when Covid/Council restrictions have allowed, even if we have only been permitted to work in pairs. Rest assured the P3 group are keen to get back to work and continue maintaining our network of local footpaths as soon as is permissible.

APM 8/21 PARISH VILLAGE HALLS

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

No social functions were held during the year due to Covid 19, but management and maintenance are ongoing - sundry costs arise and the grant of £10K was very welcome in covering these. The normal AGM was not held in May so the Trustees assumed control with the assistance of the main officers.

The outgoing Secretary Janet Radford organised a team of the former committee members to give whatever assistance was needed in the community. A photographic competition was organised and included in the Habberley Newsletter and the 100 Club continues. Over the Christmas period a carol service was held in the car park of the Mytton Arms with social distancing observed.

We look forward to being able to function normally once the Government relaxes the "lockdown".

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

Because of Corona virus restrictions our lettings were drastically reduced, all classes were cancelled, Broadplace was one of these and we are sorry to hear they will not be returning. We still have bills to pay such as the electric to keep the hall at a constant minimum temperature and water rates for cleaning.

We have taken the opportunity of this quiet period to have the hall decorated.

We are ready to open the hall at short notice when restrictions are lifted, this is due to grants from Covid 19 small business grant £10,000.00, Shropshire County Resilience grant, £500.00 and £500.00 private donation.

The Trustees thank P.P.C .and S.C.C. for their help in this difficult time.

We all hope 2021 will be a better year when we can welcome back our customers.

You can keep in touch with the Public Hall through the Pontesbury Village Newsletter and the hall notice board. The May Local Council elections will be held at the public hall.

Many thanks, Trustees, Pontesbury Public Hall

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

Cruckton Village Hall has had a very quiet 12 months.

They have moved forward with the renovation plans whilst the hall has been unable to be occupied/used. Decoration works have been underway in the main hall/side room and they have carried out repairs to the suspended floor in the side room. There are still an extensive list of works to be completed pending the funds to pay for it. As per my previous report, moving forward they need to update the toilet area and the kitchen as well as hopefully install a more economic and efficient heating system together with installing some solar panels to lower the carbon footprint.

The aim of the committee is to have an attractive, environmentally friendly public space for the benefit of the local community. Therefore, it is imperative that the hire of such remains at an affordable level to ensure that it can be used by all members of the community and as such they are seeking to obtain all necessary funding for the improvements through any other means apart from increasing the hall rental charge.

I personally wholeheartedly support keeping the hall hire affordable for all whilst providing a venue that is modern, warm and attractive for all users. It should be seen as a hub of the local community and promote local events accessible to all, therefore assisting the uphill struggle against many of today's sociological concerns including mental health, loneliness etc which are becoming more prevalent in rural communities.

Cllr D Fletcher wished to thank all of the public and village hall trustees who put a lot of hard work into running these vital community buildings.

APM 9/21 PONTESBURY PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Pontesbury Neighbourhood Plan which covers the whole Parish has made significant progress during the last year. Hundreds of responses were received to the detailed questionnaire delivered to every household during the summer. These answers plus the results of an earlier survey will inform the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan, which are designed to influence future development.

Whilst many residents are rightly concerned about the current rate of development this has largely taken care of the housing allocation given to Pontesbury for the period to 2038.

National Planning Policy requires Shropshire to take its share of future house building and in turn Pontesbury has to take its share of the county housing target. Changes proposed in Shropshire's revised Local Plan mean that rural areas take a smaller percentage of the development than at present. The revised Local Plan has changed the status of Pontesbury from a joint market town to a community hub which means a lower future housing requirement.

A Neighbourhood Plan cannot contradict national and county guidelines. What it does is give the local community a greater say in the future management of development in terms of such matters as design, amenity and safeguarding views and landscape features. In the coming year residents will have further opportunities to influence the final shape of the Neighbourhood Plan which when completed will entitle the Parish to have a greater share in the money available for local infrastructure improvement.

Cllr D Fletcher wished to thank Cllr Hodges and the members of the Steering Group for all of their hard work on the plan.

APM 10/21 FRIENDS OF PONTESBURY LIBRARY

FOPL is pleased to report that we have continued to support the library in its new home during the last 12 months. FOPL has also been able to pay the £3,500 for last year and this year, as agreed with the PPC, towards library costs. In addition there is a plan in place to develop an AV system within the Pavilion to support library and community activities. The first stage of this – to install a smart tv in the library area – is almost complete. The **Library Lottery Live** is now held on ZOOM and is proving successful, followed as it is by speakers or entertainment. It raises a steady income trickle. We have also had a number of individual donations received in the last year, an example of how community members value the library.

After the shock of lockdown FOPL's main challenge has been to work within the ruling of 'not encouraging social gatherings', when these have been the bedrock of our successful fundraising events. Undaunted the FOPL Committee came up with a number of creative ideas that could be realised within the COVID-19 rules of social distancing, mask-wearing and handwashing. The events we held (see poster below) recognised the importance of feeling part of a social occasion and doing something together. We know many people have felt isolated and everyone's well-being has taken a dip as the lockdown measures took effect. FOPL has risen to the challenge and we've measured the success of our events not simply by funds raised but by people's responses and smiles on faces as they took part.

We successfully applied for the **Coop Local Community Funding** this year and posters illustrating how we've used some of the money have been put up in both Pontesbury & Minsterley Coops and include: May Plant Sale , ongoing development of the Pavilion garden, Writing Competition with the theme of *Friendship* for adults and children, village Treasure Hunt and the Christmas Tree Trail organised with St. George's Church. FOPL look forward to working with the management in the library's new home in the coming months as restrictions are lifted.

Cllr Fletcher wished to thank FOPL for how well they have adapted to COVID to continue to fundraise for and raise the profile of the library during such difficult times.

APM 11/21 PONTESBURY CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION GROUP

Pontesbury Climate Emergency Action Group is almost a year old. It was formed in response to the climate and biodiversity crisis that we are facing, and the Parish Councils declaration of the desire to reach net zero carbon by 2030.

We had our first meeting at the Mary Webb School just before the first lockdown in March 2020 when 10 people attended.

In July 2020 the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) held a zoom workshop linked to Pontesbury Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

When it became obvious that lockdown and social distancing were going to be part of our lives for a sustained period we began to meet on Zoom, beginning in August 2020. We discussed what exactly reaching net zero carbon means in reality for the community and to find ways forward towards this goal.

The South Shropshire Climate Change Conference in September 2020 gave us a lot of food for thought on issues to be addressed and possible actions in the future, including “quick wins” and the importance of continuing to engage the public.

At Christmas we joined in with the library's Christmas tree trail, Bob and June Tune providing us with our own real tree which is planted outside the library building, with other members of the group decorating it using recycled materials.

Since then our numbers have been slowly growing, and we now have working groups for different areas where we feel some action is needed. We have started with groups looking at transport, carbon footprints and biodiversity.

Working groups

Transport: “A sub group of the climate crisis group met via zoom for their inaugural meeting on 10th February. This small but keen positive group is aiming to make some safe cycle pathways for children to cycle to school. At the moment the routes to school are not safe, with several areas of concern. We will then follow this initial project by improving cycle pathways to link up local villages and Shrewsbury. The group is exploring all options and are keen to promote cycling for health, fun & to reduce carbon emissions by getting more people using bikes, thus contributing significantly to making Pontesbury carbon zero by 2030. Many people are scared of cycling because of the heavy traffic on the roads. This results in more cars and a vicious cycle that we need to reverse. Cycling is an activity growing in popularity. We have some very exciting ideas at our fingertips, this includes a connection to a countywide scheme. If we can make the routes safer we will be able to open up some amazing opportunities to our younger generation. Now is the best to be moving forward with this fantastic opportunity. ” Di Carrington

The **biodiversity** group is planting native bulbs, plants and seeds along the Hall Bank footpath to make the area more attractive, to advertise the group, and inform people of the importance of improving our environment for nature /biodiversity. A £100 donation was received from a member of the public to buy these bulbs and seeds, for which we are very grateful.

We will also be planting a native hedge outside the nursery, plants supplied by Shropshire Council. We are also hoping to plant out the small bed outside the library with plants for pollinators.

We hope to plant trees in the parish also but it has proved very difficult to discover who to ask permission of regarding small green spaces around Pontesbury. Two members of the group have mapped suitable spaces and I have forwarded this map to Ian Pugh at Shropshire Council. I have had no reply as yet.

The **carbon** group is starting a carbon footprinting scheme in the parish, to invite groups and individuals to find out their own footprint, and give ideas of how to lessen it. These could be big ideas, like insulating house walls and roof space, or small, like eating less meat and

walking or cycling for short distances rather than using the car, or turning the thermostat down a degree.

Results will be collected and monitored over time.

This is a project supported by Shropshire Climate Action Partnership.

Zoom talks.

SWT talk on helping hedgehogs in our neighbourhood. This will be followed up in May with a community scheme.

Roy Alexander from Ashton Hayes village in Cheshire telling us of their villages journey towards zero carbon and how they have achieved progress.

In April we will be hosting Phil Holden from the AONB.

Cllr Fletcher wished to thank Liz Knowles for giving the report and working hard to lead the group forward and to maintain enthusiasm and cohesion in the current climate.

APM 12/21 PONTESBURY SPORTS ASSOCIATION

The Sports Association manages the village sports field where there are football, cricket and bowling clubs, and each of their reports follow:

WORTHEN JUNIORS FOOTBALL CLUB

Worthen Juniors has played at the Pontesbury Sports Ground for three years following the sad demise of Pontesbury Football Club. Their affiliation to the Sports Association was very welcome as it filled the gap in terms of both use of the facilities and financial shortfall.

The younger boys' and girls' teams generally use the Pontesbury pitch with the older boys playing at the Lea Cross pitches.

Obviously the number of league games was severely restricted in 2020 with only eight games being played.

Hopefully the 2021 season will be back to normal with the following set-up in place for the Pontesbury pitches :-

1 girls team that play on a Saturday

2 boys teams that play on a Sunday

1 team trains on a Tuesday night and

There are 4/5 teams that train from 6 till 8.30 on a Wednesday night

In addition five girls teams that all train on a Friday night though the summer months and there is sometimes one game for the girls on a Saturday.

PONTESBURY BOWLING CLUB

The Club has two Greens, one at the Pontesbury Sports Ground and the other adjacent to the Nag's Head pub.

The restrictions hit the Club particularly hard and no league games were played. However, the Greens were still well maintained, thanks to three volunteer groundsmen.

The Crown Green Bowling Association has decreed that no league fixtures can be played until June 2021, but when that eventually comes around the Club hopes to have a total of thirteen teams competing in four different leagues.

However, membership is reducing and the Club would very much welcome new members.

Pontesbury Cricket Club – review of 2020 season

Cricket activity other than groundwork could not start until June as the result of Covid-19.

In June as lockdown was eased following ECB protocols, we were able to start coaching, initially in groups of 6 then larger groups with a maximum 24.

The pavilion was closed throughout the season other than for access to toilets and first aid. Players and officials had to arrive in their kit and bring their own teas. During matches and coaching sessions, we had to build in regular breaks to sanitise hands and playing equipment.

Juniors

We were able to run Monday evening coaching sessions from June through to September but had to limit the number of children attending to be within the ECB Covid-19 guidelines. On a Monday we ran staggered sessions so we could manage the groups and maximise the opportunity for children to participate. This included boys and girls from 6yrs to 15yrs. Matches were played late summer for U11, U13 and U15 against local clubs. In August we ran a 3-day cricket summer camp with 15 children of mixed ages and abilities. Sadly, due to Covid-19 we were not able to run the ECB national programmes (AllStars 4-7-year olds or the new Dynamos programme for 8-11-year olds) – these will run in 2021 including a new girls only U11 softball cricket team.

Women & Girls Section

At the AGM in 2020 we formally established our Women and Girls section with their own committee reporting into the club's Executive Committee. As per 2019 interest was high amongst the ladies and coaching commenced in June and ran throughout the summer. We had teams (6-8 players) playing in softball cricket festivals at Beacon CC (Frankwell) and Shelton CC. The ladies also played two 10-a-side softball friendlies versus Oswestry and Wem.

The ladies also had a 'taster' of hardball cricket with a friendly against the U15's. In 2021 we will have a team playing in a 10-a-side softball cricket league and we will be hosting two softball cricket festivals with teams from other local clubs.

Seniors

Sadly, due to the delayed start of the season the Shrewsbury and District Evening Cricket League did not take place. We will have two teams in 2021, one of which is a development team to introduce juniors to adult cricket.

The Shropshire County Cricket League started end July and ran for 11 weeks. We entered our three teams into a regionalised league structure with no promotion or relegation. Two teams playing Saturday and one on a Sunday. The games managed to progress smoothly despite the Covid-19 restrictions and additional ECB protocols.

Flooding

Again, we experienced flooding of the ground, largely the result of the brook between the playing field and Mary Webb overflowing and the excess water from the drainage ditch at the wood side of the field. The culvert under the roadway regularly blocks and water flows across the carpark and into the garage to a depth of up to 5mm. To date limited damage has occurred to equipment and we have stored playing equipment in the pavilion.

The pavilion has frequently been surrounded by water and we have come extremely close to flood water getting into the pavilion.

This is something that seems to be getting worse.

Cllr Fletcher wished to thank PSA for their support of the foodshare during COVID and for the whole teams hard work as a valuable part of the community.

APM 13/21 COMMUNITY GOOD NEIGHBOURS PONTESBURY AND REA VALLEY

The difficulties faced by many people, particularly over the last year has highlighted the need for a local network of support to enable people to remain healthy and independent & connected within their communities.

Many of the volunteers that came forward to help with deliveries of food and prescriptions during the first lockdown showed an interest in remaining involved to support the local community. We also had a team of volunteers that belonged to the Pontesbury Coco

Befriending service. These two groups of volunteers have now joined forces to become **Community Good Neighbours, Pontesbury and Rea Valley.**

The aim of the service is to link a volunteer with a person who may be in need of a Good Neighbour volunteer for: a friendly chat; a phonecall; doing small errands or support to stay active & connected within the community. There is a dedicated phone number for people enquiring needing support (**Tel: 07944 891953**) which is answered on a rota basis by the members of the steering group.

There are now 40 volunteers being trained, all of whom receive a DBS check. Volunteers also receive ongoing support from the Community Good Neighbours Steering Group. The service follows all current Government guidelines for safety. So far the volunteers plus the steering group members have clocked up over 600 hours of volunteering time answering an average of 35 enquiries per month. Mostly these are requests for shopping/prescription delivery or befriending (currently 20 people are receiving regular phonecalls). There is also a hardship fund for people in crisis. The fund is used to give immediate financial support. Anyone contacting the scheme is signposted, where necessary, to longer term support such as debt advice, local foodbank schemes or other support agencies locally.

The Scheme gets a lot of requests for transport to hospital appointments etc. This is a form of support that the steering group is exploring for the future.

The steering group includes experienced local volunteers, the Community Care Co-ordinator from the Medical Practice and the Parish Clerk.

Financial and other support has been provided by Severn Hospice, Shropshire RCC, Pontesbury, Minsterley and Hanwood Parish Councils, The Atherton Trust, Pontesbury Medical Practice, Pontesbury Charity, Allcare and other local businesses and individuals.

Cllr Fletcher wished to minute thanks to the GNS Steering Group and all of the volunteers who have stepped up to contribute to the COVID response within the community.

APM 14/21 PARISH BUSINESS – PUBLIC COMMENTS AND VIEWS

A local resident requested that the Minsterley to Pontesbury cycleway be extended along the old railway line. Cllr Hignett would contact the footpaths team at Shropshire Council.

APM 15/21 DATE OF THE NEXT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting was agreed as 14th March 2022.

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

Meeting ended at 8.07pm

Signed
Chairman of Parish Council

Date