

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Portbury Residents
held in the Village Hall, High Street, Portbury
on Wednesday 26th May 2021 at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr Mr Phipps Cllr Mr Coles Cllr Romanski
Cllr Cheek

Chairman: Cllr Mrs Cowlard

Clerk: Mrs Drower

Others: Thirty seven members of the public
Mr Summerfield – ROW Representative

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1. **Introduction** – Councillor Mrs Cowlard welcomed residents and explained the purpose of the meeting. He also introduced Councillors individually and explained their role within the Council. Residents were requested to turn-off mobile devices and advised of emergency exit locations. Cllr Mrs Cowlard asked residents to leave questions until the Q&A at the end of the meeting. Residents were advised that the meeting was being recorded.
 2. **Convening of Meeting** – Cllr Mrs Cowlard read the Notice to convene the meeting and was accepted as Chairman for the proceedings.
 3. **Minutes of previous Annual Parish Meeting** – Due to covid restrictions there was no Annual Parish Meeting of Residents in 2020.
 4. **Statement of Parish Accounts 2020/21**
Mrs Drower presented the end of year accounts. Income received from the precept was £28886.50. As at 31st March 2021, closing bank balances were £26290.54 in the current account, (available £18696.78 after uncleared cheques), and £26006.09 in the reserve account, including a ring-fenced amount of £13739.72 which has been reserved for the parish plan development, play scheme, and war memorial maintenance. The monies are either donated or set aside by Cllrs at meetings throughout the year.

Clerk Mrs Drower explained that the council meet annually in January and set a budget for the coming year. This is paid to us by NSC as a precept in two halves, one in April and one in September.

A full set of financial statements are available to view on the parish website.

Clerk Mrs Drower advised residents that if they have any queries over the finances, they can contact the office by phone or email.

5. Portbury Parish Council Chairman's Report

Cllr Mrs Cowlard offered his thanks to all councilors for the work they do and thanked the new members for joining.

Cllr Mrs Cowlard asked the members of the general public to put their names forward if anyone is interested in joining us.

Cllr Mrs Cowlard commented that the installation of the new pylons by the National Grid continues along Sheepway and will be for some years. The National Grid are very good at keeping us informed of the progress and work schedules we need to be made aware of. We will keep residents informed of any closures etc; and the stages of the new pylons.

The works at Jct 19 are now complete and the work compound will be reinstated back to a field. We are aware of the problems these changes have unleashed and the Parish Council are in communication with Highways England, and although they are monitoring the situation changes if at all may take some time.

We are still in discussion with NSC and Highways England about the weight limits on the entrances to the village. Hopefully we will soon see some new signage erected soon. We did manage to get some weight limit signs on the railway bridges along Sheepway last year.

We finally have had most of our gullies dug out by NSC. This has taken relentless work by us, mainly Cllr Phipps to achieve this. Residents were advised to let us know if they see gullies which are blocked outside or near their properties.

Cllr Mrs Cowlard thanked Cllr Romanski and Cllr Cheek for resurfacing the village green pathway.

The war memorial has had some repairs carried out recently. NSC have upgraded all of our streetlights to LED (this is a national objective from Central Government). Some of the streetlights are owned by the parish council and we had to pay to have these upgraded to LED and replace some of the lamp posts.

Annual precept increases –

The annual precept rises are always kept to a minimum, but with cuts in services year on year, more and more maintenance is now falling to the parish council. The precept funds our clerk and village lengthsman who provides most of our maintenance and empties the dog poo bins amongst other things. Our precept spend was under budget last year during lockdown as our lengthsman had to isolate. Cllrs with help from family and friends stepped in and provided the maintenance around the village including the dog poo bins.

Traffic and parking issues – Cllr Mrs Cowlard commented that speeding is a huge concern to residents, and Miles Langdon has published truly shocking statistics. The speed monitor is loaned to us by NSC and is shared by various villages, so we have to wait our turn. Cllr Mrs Cowlard thanked Miles Langdon for coordinating

this. These figures will be shared with the Police and Highways. The police do come quite often to monitor and do issue tickets. A speedwatch group was set up in the village, but not enough volunteers from the village came forward to allow us to continue. Cllr Mrs Cowlard asked residents to please get involved and volunteer.

Parking is an issue around the village when visitors come to see the bluebells in Priors Wood from the end of March to the end of May. As Priors Wood has now been discovered we may well see an increase of visitors who will park in the village. There is no law preventing parking on the pavements unless they are causing an obstruction. Cllr Mrs Cowlard urged residents to call 101 and log it. Cllrs are currently in discussion with NSC to help us try and alleviate this annual problem. Cllr Mrs Cowlard advised that 'H'-bars may help across your driveway, and to contact the Clerk for assistance.

Crime overview and dog control- Cllr Mrs Cowlard commented that thankfully crime is low in the Portbury area. The main concern is doorstep sellers and scamming, and asked residents to look out for one another.

We have had no reports of any dogs out of control, but with the lockdown there has been a noticeable increase in dogs being walked, and therefore increasing the amount of dog waste. The dog bins now need to be emptied twice a week.

Planning overview including Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Mr Phipps commented that the Neighbourhood Plan has been ongoing for a long time and was slowed down by the work we had to do concerning the pylons. In fact the plan was able to help us fight the pylons with the objectives within it. Questionnaires have previously been sent out to residents and from this we could see what your priorities were. There are several sites around Portbury that developers and landowners have put forward for future development, however we are in the green belt, and nothing can change unless the green belt is reviewed. However, we do have some choices about the green belt. The sites nominated are the playing field, the Mill Lane field, a field opposite this, a small site opposite the village hall and land opposite the rugby club. Two sites have been put forward at the docks, one on Shipway Dock Farm. There are a further two at the end of Sheepway which are on the edge of Portbury. Originally, we thought that we could write a protection document within the plan to have some influence over any development in Portbury. However, after consulting an expert, we have been advised that we cannot do this because all proposed sites are in the green belt. Cllr Phipps commented that in order to take things forward, if we were to allocate a site, this may speed up the process of building new houses in the village. We will be sending another questionnaire to residents to hear your views.

The aim is to have the neighbourhood plan finished and sent to everyone in Portbury for a referendum when residents will have the final say.

Allotments – Cllr Coles commented that 3 years ago we started an improvement programme at the allotments. The allotments are now in a really well maintained state, with almost all plots now rented. Cllr Coles thanked Mr and Mrs Drew for all the hard work they have put into improving the allotments.

Toddler Play Park – Cllr Mrs Cowlard introduced Mr Rob Larder who explained to residents that after securing a grant from the National Grid of nearly £20000 and a further £3000 from the ring-fenced monies of the parish council, we were able to put in a second play park for our younger children. Rob Larder commented that the community had all come together and worked really hard to build the new play park.

Website and communication – Cllr Mrs Cowlard reminded residents to look at the parish council website and that there is lots of useful information about the

village on there, and also all our documents and minutes are on there.

Priorities for the next 12 months to 48 months– Cllr Mrs Cowlard commented that We want to continue our good relations with the National Grid as the pylon programme goes on.

We want to continue with the development of the neighbourhood plan

We will continue to monitor the expansion of the Docks, especially around the Shipway Farm area.

We will continue to monitor the speed through the village and try and improve this and the parking situation.

We will continue to improve the play park with additional equipment.

Councillor vacancies – Cllr Mrs Cowlard commented that we have 3 vacancies on the parish council and invited residents to think about joining us.

6. Open Forum – Q & As

Cllr Mrs Cowlard opened a question and answer session, topics included planning and the memorial.

A resident asked with regards to the neighbourhood plan “If the land is green belt, how can it be built on?” Cllr Phipps responded that we could apply to have the land taken out of the green belt, though this isn’t guaranteed.

A resident asked with regard to the neighbourhood plan “What happens if we do not have a plan?” Cllr Phipps responded, then we will have no say in future development.

A resident asked with regard to the neighbourhood plan “If our green belt status changes what could happen?” Cllr Phipps responded that is when the plan will come into its own, and the planners will take notice of our plan.

A resident asked how much it would cost us to put traffic calming in ourselves? Cllr Phipps responded that it could cost up to £100,000, and it is quite difficult in Portbury because of the design of the entries into the village.

A resident asked if a plot of land became available for development, would the land get sold to a developer? Cllr Phipps commented that yes that is how it would normally work.

A resident asked what would happen to the playing field if this land was developed. Cllr Phipps commented that he thought it would be difficult for this land to be developed because of a)the playing parks which are usually protected and b)the noise levels next to the M5 are too high.

A resident asked if developers are obliged to provide facilities such as doctors surgeries. Cllr Mr Phipps commented this would all be assessed, and developers may have to make a contribution to local service provision.

A resident asked how often the green belt is reviewed? Cllr Mr Phipps commented that he wasn’t sure there was an actual time limit, but maybe more dictated by pressure on government to provide new homes.

Cllr Mrs Cowlard thanked residents for attending and the meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed as a true record of proceedings;

Name:

Position:

Date: