



ALBRIGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Wednesday 21st April 2021 at 6.00 pm via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT:

Cllr R Smith, Chairman of Albrighton Parish Council,
Cllr. P Woodman, Vice Chairman of Albrighton Parish Council,
Mrs S Reynolds, Clerk to the Albrighton Parish Council,
Cllrs David Beechey, Mandy Medlyn, Roger Rudman, Malcolm Pate, Mike Pitchford, Alex Straney,
Peter Illes, Sylvia Pledger

6 members of the public.

Welcome and opening remarks by Cllr. Rod Smith, Chairman of Albrighton Parish Council.

Cllr. Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the purpose of the meeting was to receive the Chairman's report and the report from the Responsible Financial Officer regarding the latest financial statement. The Chairman also said that there would be opportunities for members of the public to ask questions and comment on any issues they may have.

Presentation of the Chairman of Albrighton Parish Council's Annual Report 2018/19.

The Chairman Cllr Smith gave an overview of the work of the Parish Council in the previous year which had been a year like no other with the pandemic. Covid-19 had meant that the council had to change the way it worked and operated. Like many parish councils Albrighton Parish Council had to cancel a meeting in April 2020 following Shropshire Council's Covid advice approval was given for the provision of delegated powers to enable the Clerk/Chairman to take any urgent decision-making, which would then be reported to the Council at the first available meeting.

The Chairman explained the responsibilities of the Parish Council including the provision and management of the Parish Flyer and Library. The Chairman explained that these services had to close during lockdown however the Parish Council had supported the scheme run by the Red House & St Mary's Church to take food and medicines to the elderly who were shielding, the Parish Council had made the Parish Flyer and its driver available for the Red House to turn it into a travelling shop. The Council paid all the costs of the vehicle such as the monthly lease fee, maintenance, tax and insurance and we continued to pay its driver as a council employee

with the Red House provided the fuel, this was a good example of partnership working to help residents.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk for her work in the everchanging government guidance which she has had to interpret all year along with the risk assessments she has produced to ensure that all our service delivery and staff have been covid compliant and safe. The Chairman gave an update on the current situation regarding the station ramp and the work the Parish Council was doing to ensure this project was brought to fruition, to re-open the pedestrian access ramp to platform 1 at the Station which needs agreement from Shropshire Council to build a new footpath along Station Road to meet up with the foot of the Ramp. As part of this work, discussions were held with several organisations such as Transport Focus, Network Rail, Built Environment Accessibility Panel, Shropshire Council, Department for Transport Franchise Team, West Midland Trains and finally having gained their comments and support this has allowed us to apply for a dispensation as the ramp is steeper than current Standards for new built structures. He explained that their response has now been received which is positive but that two risk assessments now need to be provided and the technical details of the lighting levels. The response will now be discussed at a Ramp Team meeting where it is hoped that those members experienced in this type of work will volunteer to complete it.

The Chairman outlined the support APC also gave to many groups and organisations in the village and the Chairman then gave an overview of other services that APC provide for residents including Christmas lights, grass cutting, tree trimming, litter warden, planters in the summer, refurbishment of village benches and also the consultation provided by the Parish Council on all on all planning issues, unfortunately as the Chairman explained we can offer our view on planning matters but we do not have the right of veto. The Chairman explained how the parish council worked with the Civic Society in preventing the development behind Shaw Lane from putting its traffic and drainage into Shaw Lane which would have increased traffic dangers to school children and patients going to the surgery. Putting its drainage into the already full Shaw Lane sewer would have exacerbated the risk of flooding in various parts of the village. This took a lot of time preparing detailed technical objections to the planning application at two Shropshire Planning meetings, which was won, and then to fight the developer's appeal run by the Bristol based Planning Inspectorate and again our position succeeded.

The Chairman updated residents on the hard work of Albrighton Flood Action Group (AFLAG) which has liaised with the Agencies working hard to get them to focus on solutions for the village. Albrighton Parish Councillor Pete Collins has a background in the water industry and is the chairman leading this group. The Council Chairman or Vice Chairman attended key meetings to emphasize Council support for their work whenever AFLAG requested.

The Parish Council had supported local clubs and societies over the last twelve months with grants awarded to several village organisations including; to repair the roof and electrics at the table tennis club; for the Royal British Legion flagpole, support for Living at Home, the Melville Club; a pledge for new boilers at the school swimming pool plus grants to others. The Council also provided substantial funding for the David Austin memorial garden and the metal

plaque which had been suggested by residents at a previous annual parish meeting. The Council also provides funding for the Nature Reserve and Churchyard maintenance.

The Chairman explained how the work of councillors is supported by the Clerk, and that during the year the Clerk had been asked to join the National Association of Local Councils national assessment panel which oversees the assessment of Council applications for the Quality Council scheme and she had also been invited to join the national consultation on the new Councillors Code of Conduct. The Clerk had undertaken several areas of training including now being a qualified Fire Warden for Albrighton Parish Council, which had been required following the last Fire Safety Assessment; she had undertaken the Fire Warden Training and final examination which was beneficial to the Council. The Chairman stated that he would like to thank Shirley, on behalf of the Council, for all her hard work and support this last year.

The Chairman also paid tribute to the late Cllr Tom Maguire who had sadly passed away recently, stating that he wanted to place on record the exceptional service which Tom provided to the Council through his chairmanship of the Finance and Personnel Committee. Cllr Maguire had worked to support the Clerk in making sure finances were well managed and transparent; and he had brought his expertise and patience to bear in dealing with personnel issues. Tom will be sorely missed by all councillors.

Cllr Smith explained that he was not standing for re-election this year; within his professional life he had been a main drafter of British Standards for the UK construction industry over many years and had recently been appointed by British Standards Institution to lead a United Kingdom's team in negotiating the UK's position in a new European Standard and also as a drafter of this document. He stated that it was important for the country that we achieve the best outcome especially after Brexit. This would be taking a lot of his time over the next 3 years and therefore he would not be able to provide enough of his time to be a councillor but stated that he would be working to support the village in other ways. The Chairman then invited questions or comments from the floor.

The Chairman noted that Cllr Malcolm Pate was no longer standing for office as a councillor for the Parish and for the County which was therefore the end of an era. Malcolm had served the community with distinction for more than 40 years in his councillor roles and had worked hard to bring benefits for residents. Malcolm had always been generous with his time and always responded to calls for help. His long council experience meant that he was called on to act as a mentor and advisor to many Councillors and many Chairmen of the Parish including himself. On behalf of the Parish Council and the community the Chairman thanked Malcolm for all his efforts and long service and wished him well in his well-deserved retirement.

Cllr Beechey stated that he was concerned that so many Councillors had decided to not stand for re-election and the implications this would have on the Parish Council. Cllr Beechey explained that the Parish Council would now lose its right to the 'General Power of Competence' which would really restrict the Parish Council's activities and right to spend on projects and it would also not be able to achieve quality council status. The Clerk explained that this loss would mean that Albrighton Parish Council's expenditure under the Local Government Act (s137) would now be limited and will also have to be budgeted for

separately. Expenditure will be restricted for example it cannot be used to benefit a single individual and the amounts must be commensurate with the benefit to its area or residents.

Cllr Woodman answered saying he understand Cllr Beechey's point, he himself had joined the council and then persuaded others to join to put something back into the village. Cllr Woodman said that his personal reason and he believed that of others were that they couldn't stand the hassle with some members of the council and that the last year it had been unacceptable.

Cllr Pate thanked the Chairman and others for their kind words and he also concluded that it should be obvious why many councillors were not re-standing as the last few years on APC had been toxic and that his view reflected that of the Vice Chairman, the Parish Council should look after the community but this had not been the case.

Cllr Pitchford agreed that the council atmosphere had been absolutely toxic and that he hadn't joined the council for what he had experienced in the last 3 years, he had lived in Albrighton for 50 years and did a lot of other voluntary work which he would continue to do without the toxicity of the council.

Presentation of the annual accounts 2020/21 of Albrighton Parish Council by Mrs Shirley Reynolds RFO & Clerk to the Council.

The Chairman asked the Clerk to present her financial report to the meeting, she explained that the accounts were draft accounts at this stage, they had been approved by the internal auditor and would be submitted to the external auditor at the end of the month for final approval and sign off. The report showed the overall balance on the Council's five accounts and also the summary of all income and expenditure for the year.

The Clerk explained that whilst the overall balance may appear a large sum, councils are duty bound to provide 6 months running costs in reserves which for APC equated to around £75,000.

The Chairman added that the Parish Council always strive to be prudent and would always seek best value for residents whilst protecting services. The Chairman asked if there were any questions from the floor.

A resident stated that the figures presented provided more detail than was on the website but he would have liked to know what was included in some of the categories. He said the format is not as he was used to with his own business accounts and asked why the format was as it was. The Chairman and Vice Chairman also confirmed that the Council format is different from that used by commercial companies. He also asked how many people the council employed. The Clerk provided the details of employee numbers and explained that the presentation format of Albrighton's accounts had to comply with the laid down format for local government accounts which was very different from a commercial accounts format. She explained that full details of all council income and expenditure transactions were included on agendas and minutes which were available to the public on the parish notice board, the website and other social media platforms. The Chairman also added that Cllr Tom

Maguire who was a former bank manager had also explained that local government account methods were complicated and as Chairman of Finance & Personnel he had always produced his own set of accounts each month as part of the internal controls process.

The Clerk asked if there were any areas of the accounts which the resident would like further details on and continued to provide greater detail on the areas asked.

There being no further questions the Chairman thanked the Clerk for her hard work over the last year.

To formally accept the annual report, council accounts and last Annual Parish minutes.

Cllr. Woodman proposed that the meeting should accept the Chairman of Albrighton Parish Council's report, the council accounts and the last Annual Parish minutes which was seconded by Cllr Pitchford which was agreed by a majority.

Final thanks by Cllr. Rod Smith.

The Chairman thanked all current councillors and the Clerk and all the Council Staff for their hard work and support during this last year and he wished the seven people who are standing for Parish Council his best wishes and trusted that they may be successful in carrying on with the work of Albrighton Parish Council to the benefit of all our residents and local businesses.

Cllr. Smith concluded by thanking everyone who attended the meeting for their time and interest, and that as there was no further business or questions closed the meeting at 7.13 pm.

Signed..... Date.....