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| <p>PRESTEIGNE AND NORTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION</p> <p>VISIT BY LIGNEENS 4th - 7th JULY 2008</p> | <p>SUNDAY 6TH JULY, 10.30am, ASSEMBLY ROOMS, PRESTEIGNE</p> <p>LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN LIGNE AND PRESTEIGNE AND NORTON</p> |
| <p>The following presentations were made on behalf of both towns, each in the language of the town, followed by translations.</p> | |
| <p>Participants</p> <p>Chairs: John Kendall, André Girard</p> <p>Presteigne and Norton: Councillor James Tennant-Eyles, and Sophie Deakins, Head Girl, John Beddoes School</p> <p>Ligné: Michel Briet, Denise Mazeau</p> | <p>Sources : local press, Presteigne Tourism website, Ligné's official website, reports of the Town Councils, Ligné Planning Department</p> |
| <p>PRESTEIGNE AND NORTON</p> | <p>LIGNE</p> |
| <p>Local council and population Presteigne and Norton Town Council, covering those two communities, with a joint population of about 2.500.</p> | <p>Local council and population Ligné officially has a population of 3,801 inhabitants, (2004 census), but as of now we have undoubtedly passed the 4,000 mark. Population has doubled in 30 years. Since 2000, it is thought that the population has increased by 30%.</p> |
| <p>Members (councillors) There are 13 members, nine for Presteigne and four for Norton: nine men and four women: average age unknown. There are no electoral rules requiring a quota of women candidates</p> | <p>Members (councillors) Since the last elections, the Town Council comprises 27 members, (14 men and 13 women), with an average age of 47. For the first time, due to the size of the community, the make-up of the lists of candidates had to show equal numbers of men and women. This applied also to Deputy Mayors.</p> |

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| <p>Elections Elections are held every four years. The most recent were in May 2008. This year, as there were fewer than 13 candidates, there was no election. The candidates became the members of the Town Council, and they then co-opted others to fill the vacancies.</p> | <p>Elections Elections are held every six years, most recently on March 9, 2008. Two lists were on the ballot paper, one list had 24 candidates elected (77.35%) ; the other list 3 candidates (22.65%).</p> |
| <p>Mayor The chair of the Town Council is also called the mayor. The mayor is elected by the councillors and holds office for one year. The mayor does not hold office in successive years. Colin Kirkby, who is our current mayor, has been mayor five times in the last 21 years. The mayor chairs the monthly meetings of the Town Council and has a casting vote when there is a tie. There is also a deputy mayor elected by the councillors, similarly holding office for one year.</p> <p>Allowances The Mayor has an annual expenses allowance of £1,000. There are no expenses allowances for other councillors.</p> | <p>Mayor The mayor is elected by the Town Council for <u>six years</u> and is re-electable. The current Mayor, Maurice Perrion, is on his third term, meaning that he has been Mayor since 1995. He has seven assistants, or deputies, who each have a very specific responsibility (finance and economic development, communication, cleansing, sport, education, culture etc.)</p> <p>Allowances The Mayor has a gross monthly allowance of 2,011.39 Euros. The Deputies also may draw a gross monthly allowance of 804.56 Euros per month. Each Councillor receives 61.73 Euros.</p> |
| <p>Meetings The monthly meetings are generally well attended by councillors. They tend to last at least two hours. Sometimes there is a guest speaker: recently we have heard representatives of the police, providers of low cost housing and a group seeking to make our town capable of surviving the energy crisis. Other items on the agenda of the meetings are finance, planning; highways housing and environment; Norton matters; Wentes Meadow: the Memorial Hall (our largest community hall, which now needs to be rebuilt), and the toilets.</p> <p>Publicity The minutes of the council meetings are published on the Presteigne website, www.presteigne.org.uk/Town_Council.</p> | <p>Meetings _The Town Council meets once a month. Agenda items are prepared by different committees, all chaired by the mayor. These meetings are open to the public, and take place in the large meeting room in the Town Hall. Generally only a few people attend the meetings. The minutes are displayed in the Town Hall, published in the local press, and online on the town's website.</p> <p>Publicity _The Town Hall publishes a monthly newsletter called Ligné-Info, and a fuller town bulletin appears twice a year. These publications are distributed to people's homes and are available at the Town Hall. In addition, since September 2007 the town's website (http://www.ligne.fr/index.html) puts online information about the town, but only in French, apart from the PNTA Newsletters.)</p> |

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| <p>Staff We have one part-time clerk.</p> | <p>Staff At present the town of Ligné employs about 30 people (33 employees, of whom some are part-time, so this amounts to about 20 full-time equivalent.) About 10 people work at the Town Hall itself, the others are employed at the library, the Cultural Centre, in Technical Services (rubbish collection, green spaces) and the state school Jules Verne (other than the teachers who are paid by the State). There are plans for a full-time post of town police constable to be created shortly.</p> |
| <p>Land and buildings The Town Council owns the northern part of Wentes Meadow with the barn, and leases the southern section, including the public toilets, from Powys County Council. The Town Council has no offices. The Town Council meetings are held in a room in the Judge's Lodging.</p> | <p>Land and buildings The Town owns the Town Hall, Post Office, Church building, presbytery, communal centre (library and meeting rooms), the Salle des Acacias, the Cultural Centre, Jules Verne School, school restaurant, children's centre, Eugène Durand Sports Centre, sports grounds (football, tennis...), water purification plant built in 2006, 50 hectares of agricultural land where the residue of the plant is spread, reserve land and emergency housing etc.....</p> |
| <p>The next tier of government is Powys County Council, whose headquarters are in Llandrindod Wells. Powys is a large part of Wales, almost entirely rural, and with a very small population. Presteigne has just one county councillor.</p> <p>Relations with Powys County Council. As so many of the decisions are taken by the County Council, the Town Council spends much of its time liaising with Powys County Council.</p> | <p>Relations with other councils Ligné is one of 29 communities making up Compa, (the association of communities of Ancenis Region, totalling 54,000 inhabitants). Ligné has 4 representatives at this association, and Maurice Perrion is the second Vice President.</p> <p>Compa fulfils various functions on behalf of the constituent communities, some of them are mandatory, others have been taken on to promote and facilitate coherent and well-thought-out development in the wider region.</p> |
| <p>Budget The Town Council's budget is about £25,000 per annum. This is raised by taking a small proportion of the local council tax levy. This is spent on: the salary of the clerk; upkeep of the toilets, the barn and Wentes meadow; and grants to local charities.</p> | <p>Budget The overall budget for the town in 2008 is 2,708,600 Euros. Operating income is principally made up of direct contributions, reimbursement by Compa of business taxes (ie 1,507,500 Euros of local duties and various taxes) and an operating grant from the State of 1,013,900 Euros.</p> <p>Nearly 1MN Euros (966,200 Euros to be exact) are allocated to staff salaries.</p> |

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| <p>Services The Town Council does not have responsibility for providing services such as water, sewerage, health, housing, street cleaning, rubbish collection, road maintenance, police and education. These are provided by Powys County Council or local boards. Recently Powys, following a line taken by many other county councils, drastically reduced the number of public toilets, and closed the toilets at Wentes Meadow. We decided to take over the toilets and run them ourselves. This is a trend that may develop over the next few years, with greater local control of more services and the money to pay for them.</p> <p>Consultation The Town Council is largely a consultative forum. By law, it has to be consulted on certain issues, such as planning. The Town Council receives a great quantity of paper from the Welsh Assembly Government in Cardiff as well as from Powys County Council, to which we try to respond.</p> <p>Power or influence? Because the Town Council does not provide services, it has few powers except over its small budget. But, because of the consultation process, and the fact that it is a representative democratic body, the Town Council does have influence.</p> | <p>Services The Town of Ligné has a role in the following areas, among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil ceremonies (births, marriages, and deaths) Social services (housing, social support) Planning (building permissions, local planning, zoning) Rubbish collection and networks Schools (state and private under local contract) Culture (season of events, library) Open spaces Environment, water supply, household waste, street cleaning Sports Police, Fire Service |
| <p>Planning Planning takes up quite a lot of our time, and recently there have been two very contentious applications for which we have held special meetings. These were an application to build a supermarket near the recycling car park, and an application to build a wind farm just over the English border.</p> | <p>Planning The Mayor grants building permits. From 1998 to 2007, the average number of annual permits granted was for <u>51</u> new builds of family homes, and <u>6</u> for complete renovations of old buildings, with a record number of <u>101</u> granted in 2001. Since 2001, nearly 500 new homes have been authorised, along with 45 complete refurbishments of old buildings. These statistics do not include commercial or professional buildings, like the supermarket for example).</p> |
| <p>Political affiliations Councillors do not stand for election as members of any political party. This is a small community, and few of the issues have party political aspects. We believe this is a considerable advantage.</p> | <p>Political affiliations Neither of the two political lists on the ballot at the last elections had the support of a 'political machine'. The Town Council does not split along party lines, and therefore local issues and projects can be discussed and advanced with a view to what is best for the quality of life of all the people of Ligné.</p> |