

Withington Annual Village Meeting

Wednesday 8th May 2024
at 7.00pm
in the Parish Room

Minutes

2024/A Present: Councillors Phil Heath (Chair), Neil Maxwell, Lesley Stone, Alan Williams, Cllr Lezley Picton, Denise Roscoe (Clerk) and 8 members of the public

2024/B Welcome: Cllr Heath welcomed everyone

2024/C Apologies: Cllr Martin Timmis, Bernie Jones, Jon Scutt, Brenda Marshall and Helen Thomas

2024/D Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Village Meeting 11th May 2022
The Chairman signed the minutes.

2024/E Report from Parish Council Chairman

I will use this opportunity to address some of the main issues that arouse most interest amongst our parishioners, namely:

- planning applications
- roads and traffic
- flooding and sewerage overflows
- crime

1: Planning.

In 2018 Shropshire Council reviewed the Local Plan with a public consultation on Preferred Development Site Allocations and. I am pleased to say that Withington is currently not viewed as a development area and will remain as "open countryside" the definition of which is that the only building allowed is the conversion of existing building to residential use, the building of low-cost housing for justified local need and extensions etc to existing properties.

Previously Shropshire Council would notify immediate neighbours of any planning application that may impact them but from the beginning of this year they have stopped doing so unless the extension is over the permitted development limit of 4 meters. Your PC consider this to be unfair and therefore have committed to informing parishioners of any planning application that may affect them.

There have been a small number of application for remodelling/extending of existing houses and a major application for the installation of a solar farm. Each has been sent to the PC for review and discussed with immediate neighbours.

Most have been approved with little discussion, but some others have been rejected or went to the planning committee. The most notable being:

- Bakers House
Shropshire Council Planning Department refused the application to knock down and build a new dwelling at Bakers House as it had not been demonstrated it was not economically viable to retain and repair the existing property and that the proposed dwelling was not sympathetic to the scale, character and appearance of the original dwelling. A subsequent application for lawful development involving a new development design was also refused.

The owners have since submitted and new application following consultation with the planning department which has now been approved. The original house has been demolished and work has started on the new build

Minutes confirmed as correct _____ 7 May 2025 _____

Chairman

- **Solar Farm at Church Farm**
An application to build a 25Mw solar farm covering approximately 100 acres was made by the Nicklin brothers in conjunction with Berrys land agents and Elgin Energy. In order to obtain the views of parishioners your PC carried out a survey of all adults on the electoral role. The result being that your PC declared our position as neutral to the application. The planning application was approved on the 13th April 2024. Your PC negotiated a community benefit fund (CBF) of £4000 per Mw equating to £100,000 to be paid upon commissioning of the installation. CBF's are a voluntary payment made by companies such as Elgin to communities where solar farms are installed and is a common practice throughout the industry.

I am pleased to announce that the contract for the CBF has now been signed

The money will be used to fund projects within our community. We have yet to decide how this money will be managed and spent but it will be done in cooperation with our parishioners.

2: Roads and Traffic.

Roads

The condition of the lanes around Withington still remains a concern even though Shropshire Council occasionally patch and repair potholes. Parishioners who discover new potholes should report them as soon as possible to either to the PC Clerk or Shropshire Council via the "Fix my Street" before they become an even bigger problem. This year the problem has been exasperated by the extreme wet weather.

HGV & Large Agricultural Vehicles

The number and size of HGV's has always been a problem for the Parish in terms of the safety of other road users and the damage they cause to the roads and verges. The majority of HGV's deliver to CJ Wildlife. The PC have worked with CJ Wildlife and Shropshire Roads Department to try and address the problem which has resulted in a reduction of the number of HGV's passing through the village.

We have also seen a significant increase in the number of very large agricultural vehicles in our area that has resulted in damage to roads and verges as well as large deposits of mud on the roads. These appear to belong to contractors working for local farmers over a short but intense period of time. Whilst we live in a rural community and should expect agricultural traffic and the noise/smells etc associated with farming we do expect the contractors to keep the roads clear and respect our environment.

3: Flooding & Sewerage Overflows

Flooding.

Flooding after heavy rain has become a common occurrence primarily due to the roadside drains and ditches being unable to cope with the volume of water. Even more so this winter with the exceptional wet weather we have had.

The responsibility for ensure roadside drains and in some cases, ditches implemented to assist road drainage is with Shropshire Council. Your PC does request regular cleaning and remedial work to be carried out.

Where the ditches are the responsibility of the local landowner, we engage with them to request the ditches are cleared as has happened recently in Caernarvon Lane.

Sewerage Overflows

In previous years we have had the occasional sewerage overflow following heavy rains which resulted in Severn Trent (ST) attending to flush out the offending drain. This year however we have had frequent overflows resulting in ST carrying out a full survey of the drainage system in Withington and the flushing of all drains. The problem is being exasperated by the number of new houses that have been built in Rodington as the mains sewerage system runs from there, through Withington and onto Upton Magna. The PC's concern is that we appear to be at maximum capacity for the existing sewerage infrastructure which is why we have raised objections to the Telford & Wrekin 5-year

development plan that potentially proposes an addition 300 plus houses be built in the Rodington area. The PC will be monitoring this plan and ensuring our concerns are heard and addressed by both T&W and ST.

4: Crime.

We are fortunate to live in what the Police class as a low crime area.

The West Midlands Police launched their Local Policing Charter and consulted with parish/town councils to identify their three top concerns. Your PC has agreed at the that the 3 key issues for the parish are:

1. Speeding

We have asked Shropshire Council to consider Withington as part of the 20 MPH pilot scheme. The urban area taking part in the scheme have been announced. The rural areas have yet to be agreed. There appears little we can do about speeding in the lanes outside the village as the limit is set at 60MPH.

2. Fly Tipping

We continue to get fly tipping in our area which is classed as a criminal offence. I urge anyone who witnesses or finds fly tipping to report it to our Parish Clerk or Shropshire Council.

Of concern to your PC is the recent survey issued by SC regarding the future management of garden waste and the need or not for all the current waste disposal centres. The closure of any of the waste management sites will only lead to an increase in fly tipping and should be resisted.

3. Wildlife Crime

We live in a rural area and are therefore more likely to encounter crimes against wildlife such as poaching, hare coursing and the unlawful killing of birds of prey, badger etc. We therefore need to be aware this activity is taking place and report any suspicious activity to the police and local landowners.

Finally,

I wish to thank.

- My fellow Parish Councillors and our Clerk for their efforts and support over the last 12 months.
- Members of the Village Green Committee for ensuring that our village green continues to be maintained and improved to the benefit of all Parishioners. I wish to remind everyone that the work of the Committee is funded by charitable donations and would encourage parishioners to join the "Friends of the Village Green" to support this important village asset. Donations to date have enabled us to recently purchase a new mower.
- The members of our community who actively engage with the PC and SC, ST etc to identify and help resolve issues and also organise activities that improve the overall quality of life for our parishioners.

2024/F Report from Cllr Lezley Picton

I am sure it will not be a surprise to any of you that our major focus for the 23/24 financial year was on financial stability, and this continues into this financial year and no doubt beyond, especially if there are no changes to the national funding agreements for Local Government.

This is not just a problem in Shropshire, Councils across England are suffering, and our plight is made worse due to the rural nature of where we live.

We, like our nearest neighbours in Telford, Staffordshire, and Herefordshire, are having to increase council tax, increase fees and charges and yet cut services which will include making redundancies. Please look at our budget-specific pages on our website which can be found by clicking Our 24-25 Budget Explained.

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Chairman

There is no doubt that for most top-tier councils who have responsibility for social care services, upwards of 75% of their budgets are spent on this area. The demand, cost and increased complexity is pushing up these costs all the time and this is almost entirely the cause of our financial difficulties. Yes, there is a hangover of high inflation but in the main, it is the cost of looking after our most vulnerable people for which we have a legal and ethical responsibility.

Despite the huge amount of work that it takes to make these changes to services and staffing, the Council is still investing in our County and providing a very broad spectrum of services.

Councillor Picton's full report is attached.

It covers the following:

- Finance and Resources Update
- Climate Change the Environment and Transport
- Flexible (Demand Response Transport)
- Waste
- Shrewsbury Movement and Public Space Strategy
- Active Travel
- Planning & Regulatory Services
 - Draft Local Plan
 - Economic Growth
 - Adult Social Care and Public Health
 - Children and Education
 - Culture and Digital
 - Housing and Assets
 - Highways
- Local Matters

2024/G Public Forum

The Chairman was asked when the work is scheduled to start on the Solar Farm – Cllr Heath reported that E66 plan to start construction at the end of Summer and connection to the grid should be early in 2025.

Concerns were expressed about installation of full-fibre broadband in the village – it was agreed that the PC would distribute information to parishioners as they become aware of it. Full-fibre broadband will be included on the agenda for the PC's July 2024 meeting.

Concerns were expressed about the moto-cross circuit that has suddenly appeared in a field by the Lees. A parishioner informed the Chairman that events were being advertised on the MidWales Moto-Cross Facebook Page.

Action to be taken: Establish who owns the land, establish whether planning permission is required or event permits, Clerk to write to landowner and Moto-Cross Circuit to be included on the agenda for the PC's July 2024 meeting.

2024/H Date of next Annual Village Meeting Wednesday 7th May 2025

Closure of meeting.