

Withington Annual Village Meeting

Wednesday 2nd May 2018 at 7.00pm in the Parish Room

Minutes

100/2017 Present: Councillors Phil Heath (Chairman), Neil Maxwell, Lesley Stone, Martin Timmis, Alan Williams, Denise Rosoce (Clerk), Mathew Mead (SC Community Enablement Officer), Lezley Picton (Shropshire Councillor Tern Ward) and 9 members of the public.

101/2017 Welcome: The Chairman welcomed everyone

102/2017 Apologies: Shirley Davies

103/2017 Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Village Meeting held on 10th May 2017
Minutes accepted as correct and signed by chairman

104/2017 Report from Parish Council Chairman

Planning. Planning applications have always aroused more interest and discussion than any other subject. The PC position as defined in the 2013 Parish Plan is that Withington has elected to be classified as “open countryside” and therefore there should be no new houses built within the Parish unless they are low-cost for local need or a conversion of existing building to residential use.

Shropshire Council are currently reviewing the Local Plan with a public consultation on Preferred Development Site Allocations scheduled for October 2018. They have also started conversations with Town and Parish Councils where they are proposing development. I am pleased to say that Withington is currently not viewed as a development site.

We will be updating our Village Plan this summer as it is best practice to do so every 5 years and it ensures Shropshire council are aware of the views/concerns of our parishioners. We will be issuing a questionnaire to all parishioners to gain their input and would encourage everyone to respond. In previous years we have issued a printed version of the plan to each household however on this occasion in order to reduce costs to the Parish and be more environmental friendly we will publish the report on our web site. Should a parishioner not have access to the web site we can produce a printed copy upon request.

There have been no new planning applications for houses this year however there is the ongoing issue regarding applications for chicken sheds at both the Rea Farm and Upton Forge farm. Whilst both these applications are in the parish of Upton Magna they will have an impact on Withington and therefore your PC have objected to both on the basis of,

- Increase in HGV traffic even though Sundorne Estate and Upton Forge farm assure us the contractor will use the route out to Berwick Warf & Atcham
- Smells & odours as the prevailing winds will bring these direct to Withington.

No decisions have been reached as there are still outstanding reports regarding the environmental impact of both planning applications

Our understanding is that the Rea Farm application has stalled due to objections from the Canal Society that the development will encroach upon the route of the canal. Upton Forge have now agreed an HGV routing plan taking traffic towards Berwick Wharf.

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Roads and Traffic.

The condition of the lanes around Withington still remain a concern even though the Council occasionally patch and repair potholes. Parishioners who discover new potholes should report them as soon as possible to either the PC or Shropshire Council before they become an even bigger problem.

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 which 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. Parishioners should report any damage, preferably with pictures, vehicle details etc to the Parish Clerk so we can follow it up with Shrewsbury Council roads department.

Such is the concern regarding traffic issues the PC approved a report produced by our Clerk, Stuart Jones and Derek Hillaby which analysed the HGV/contractor vehicles usage of our lanes with examples of the damage they have caused. We have used this report to create a "Community led concern" report which was submitted to Shropshire Council in February this year. This is a formal process for reporting our issues and the three key priorities that we have requested to be addressed are

- HGV's using Withington to access Upton Magna and as a short cut to other major roads
- Contractors agricultural vehicles using Withington as a "rat run" to access farms in other villages/parishes
- The increase in the number of field accesses being created to accommodate the larger agricultural vehicles.

The report requires the support of:

Shropshire Local Council Member – Lezley Picton, supports our case

Withington Parish Council – support the report

West Mercia Police

Shropshire Council Local Traffic Engineer.

We await feedback.

On a positive note we are informed that Sundorne Estate has appointed an Estate Manager who will start in June/July and take over from Balfours. The Estate Manager will be attending local Parish Council meetings in the future with a view to working with the local villages to address their concerns regarding traffic.

Crime.

Whilst we are fortunate to live in what the Police class as a low crime area we have unfortunately experience a number of "fly tipping incidents. We should therefore always remain vigilant and anyone who sees suspicious vehicles or activity should report it to the police. For example, in the last week we had a report of a young man calling door to door selling domestic cleaning products and whilst this may have been genuine one of our residents was suspicious and report it to the police by calling 101.

A community Support Officer travels with the mobile library and is available to discuss any concerns/issue regarding policing matters.

We receive regular incident reports from the Police for parishes in Shropshire together with suggestion on how to reduce the risk of crime however we do need a Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator for our Parish so if anyone is interested please contact Phil Heath.

Finally,

I wish to thank my fellow Parish Councillors 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. Parishioners are reminded that the work of the Committee is funded by charitable donations and not from the village precept and welcome donations from new members of "the Friends of the Village Green" to support this important village asset.

I also wish to thank Jenny Newby for all the work she has carried out over recent years in maintaining the public footpaths in our Parish as part of the PPP (Parish Paths Partnership). Jenny decided to retire from this role and we are fortunate in that her place has been taken by Helen Thomas who will no doubt be supported by Wayne Thomas when it comes to any "heavy lifting".

A special mention must be made of Brian and Josie Smith who organised a vintage tractor rally to raise funds for a village defibrillator, such was the success of the event that sufficient funds were raised for not only the defibrillator but for generous donations to be made to the British Heart Foundation, Village Green, the Parish Room and the Church. Training in the use of the defibrillator is being organised by Councillor Maxwell and will be announced shortly, we encourage parishioners to attend.

105/2017 Report from Shropshire Councillor Lezley Picton

Budgetary Pressures

It is now accepted both locally and nationally that Adult Social Care and Looked After Children create major pressures on Council's available budgets. Over 50% of Shropshire Council's annual net budget is spent on Adult Social Care and this figure continues to rise by an average of £8m year on year. In addition to this, the increased costs (on average £4m year on year) of Looked After Children presents Shropshire Council with a major budgetary problem. This is not just an issue for Shropshire Council. Representatives from Shropshire council (and councils across the UK), along with our MPs are lobbying government to find a formula as we have for schools so that adult social care is funded on a national rather than local basis. The current administration of the Council has forecast a balanced budget for the years 2018/19 and 2019/20 but to balance the budget over a five-year term, 2022/23 there is a current budget deficit of £43m. The Administration of the Council has altered its focus to concentrate on increasing income both within commercial and trading services, but it is inevitable that there will need to be further cuts.

Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care (ASC) has had a year of challenges and changes. In June we welcomed a sector led improvement peer challenge. The Peer Review team were complimentary about the work of ASC and noted the enthusiasm of the ASC workforce and all stakeholders they engaged with. The Peer Review saw a clear commitment to making a positive difference to the lives of Shropshire residents and achievement was recognised in the Council's approach to partnership and engagement.

Adult Services net budget has increased by £5.8m from 2016/17 to 2017/18, due to the combination of a growing and ageing population, increasingly complex care needs, and increases in care costs. It is well evidenced that the demographic pressures on adult social care will increase further in the longer-term. Shropshire Council's expenditure on adult social care is forecast to increase by £7m next year, and by an average of £8.3m per year over the next 5 years.

Adult social care continues to flex and adapt to an ever-changing landscape of challenges; more people with more complex needs, care providers struggling to recruit staff in rural areas and of National Living Wages, and healthcare colleagues working to reorganise hospital-based services. There are considerable uncertainties around future funding initiatives from Government in relation to Adult Social Care and the across the wider health & social care economy. Short term funding initiatives such as the Improved Better Care Fund have brought in welcome funding and enabled a number of exciting initiatives such as 2 carers in a car, but the concern does remain that this is not long-term funding and ASC cannot rely upon it.

Local Plan Review

Shropshire is in the fortunate position of having a sound local plan and a six-year land supply. The current adopted Local Plan covers the period 2006 to 2026. Consultation took place in late 2017 on the first review of our plan covering the period 2016 – 2036 (an extra 10 years). The Planning Policy Team consulted on

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the Preferred Scale and Distribution of Growth as part of the ongoing Local Plan Review. Around 650 responses were received including many responses from Town and Parish Councils, local organisations, land owners and developers. The Policy Team are currently reviewing these responses and a Summary document is being prepared and will form part of a Cabinet Report for the 2nd May. This Cabinet Report will also clarify the future timetable for the Local Plan Review.

The next Key stage of the Local Plan Review is a public consultation on Preferred Site Allocations in October 2018. This will set out the proposed sites in Shrewsbury, Market Towns, Key Centres and, if necessary, Community Hubs. To inform the choice of preferred sites the Policy Team are currently preparing a number of supporting documents, including the Green Belt Review and a new Landscape Capacity Assessment. We have also started the conversations with the Town and Parish Councils where we are proposing development, and these discussions will help inform the eventual choice of preferred sites.

Environmental Maintenance Grant

After pressure from rural councillors Cabinet have agreed to reinstate Environmental Maintenance Grants. You should soon receive a letter containing the details of the revised scheme and will be asked to comment. The scheme is limited to a maximum of £1,500 per parish and will need to be match funded 100%. For example, to receive the full grant you will have to spend £3,000 on eligible schemes within your parish. The activity eligible for funding by the Environmental Maintenance Grant will be undertaken on Shropshire Council owned land and assets only.

Kier Contract

A new partnership responsible for delivering a wide range of highways maintenance and environmental maintenance services in Shropshire began work on 1 April 2018.

The Shropshire Highways Alliance is made up of Shropshire Council, WSP – the council's engineering consultant, and Kier – the council's new highways maintenance contractor.

From 1 April 2018 Kier will be responsible for highways projects and schemes, pothole repair, gritting, bridge maintenance, grass cutting, drainage, street lighting, emergency responses, vehicle maintenance and more.

It was disappointing that the start of the new contract coincided with further bad weather, however, Kier have already employed an additional number of work teams to reduce the backlog of work that was left by the previous contractor (who were disappointing to say the least). The new contract has also seen an additional £1.85m from national government to specifically deal with the many potholes on our roads.

Local Matters

Locally, planning issues, highway matters and dog fouling are still hot topics for my inbox and I am hopeful that we will be able to find resolutions to some of these matters over the next year.

The Forge Farm extension will be heard by committee on 10th May, it is recommended for approval which is not unexpected, we have however, managed to secure an agreement regarding traffic routing. There is no date as yet for the Rea Farm application.

I am also aware that a number of highway matters are yet to be resolved, this is a slow process and for that I apologise but currently the Highways team is entirely focussed on potholes.

I've very much enjoyed my first year as your local Councillor and I look forward to the coming year.

106/2017 Public Forum

Concerns were raised regarding the speed of vehicles coming through the village and the size of the agricultural vehicles which are too big for our small country lanes.

107/2017 Date of next Annual Village Meeting – Wednesday 8th May 2019

Closure of meeting.

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