

Withington Annual Village Meeting

Wednesday 11th May 2022
at 7.00pm
in the Parish Room

Minutes

2022/A Present: Councillors Phil Heath (Chair), Lesley Stone, Alan Williams, Martin Timmis, Denise Roscoe (Clerk) and 9 members of the public

2022/B Welcome: Cllr Heath welcomed everyone

2022/C Apologies: Cllr Lezley Picton, Cllr Neil Maxwell and Bernie Jones

2022/D Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Village Meeting 1st September 2021
The Chairman signed the minutes.

2022/E Report from Parish Council Chairman

Before addressing some of the main issues that arouse most interest amongst our parishioners, namely

- planning applications
- roads and traffic
- crime

We should not forget that Covid is still with us and whilst all government restrictions related to the pandemic have been lifted, we should still be on our guard and should anyone having Covid need assistance please contact a member of the PC to see if we can help.

Planning.

Planning applications have always aroused more interest and discussion than any other subject.

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 applications for conversions of building to residential use and also remodelling/extending of existing houses. Each has been sent to the PC for review and discussed with immediate neighbours.

In two instances Shropshire Council Planning Department refused planning applications

- the application to knock down and build a new dwelling at Bakers House as it had not been demonstrated that 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

Minutes confirmed as correct _____ 10 May 2023 _____

Chairman

- The conversion of a listed barn to residential use at Nicklin's Farm as it was considered that any benefits of reuse of the barn are outweighed by the significant works required to make the building suitable for residential use.

The key message is that even in these times of significant demand for new houses Shropshire council will refuse development if they consider it against existing policies.

It will be interesting to see the impact of recently proposed government changes to planning legislation that will allow neighbours to vote on planning applications for new housing development. As one tory MP stated "this will mean local residents can't have unwanted development thrust upon them"
We will need to wait and see if this becomes legislation.

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 before they become an even bigger problem.

Speeding

Your PC have considered the implementation of traffic calming measures in the village, but these have to be backed by evidence of speeding and accidents etc. The Police, at the request of your PC, have recently carried out spot checks for speeding in the village and have reported no violations.

Speeding along the lanes into and out of Withington remains a concern, particularly with the number of cyclists and horse riders using the lanes. Unfortunately, on these narrow roads the limit is up to 60MPH which is certainly not appropriate as evidenced in a recent survey carried out by BRAKE, the road safety charity, which showed that on rural roads the death rate is 10 times that of an urban environment.

The Parish Council have contacted Shropshire Council with a view to being included in a 20mph pilot scheme

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. 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 be carried out, an example being outside Hucksters Cottage although we consider more work needs to be done to finally solve that issue.

Other drainage ditches used to drain excess water from fields etc are the responsibility of the land owner and where your PC can identify the owner we will request the ditch be dug out. An example being in Caernarvon Lane when Ian Roberts carried out such work to alleviate flooding.

Your PC have requested a definitive map from Shropshire Council showing which drains/ditches are their responsibility so that we can liaise with landowners on other drains/ditches that may need to be dug out.

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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 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.

The problem is common to most rural parishes and in March 2021 Shropshire Council set up the Agricultural Reference Group, of which our Clerk is a member, with the aim of "Looking into how agricultural issues, including Traffic, impact rural communities".

However there have been no further meetings/actions since May 2021 so no progress has been made

Crime

We are fortunate to live in what the Police class as a low crime area and I am not aware of any recent criminal activity in our Parish.

Local Policing Charter

In March this year the West Midlands Police launched their Local Policing Charter and consulted with parish/town councils to identify their three top concerns. Your PC stated that the key issues for the parish are

1. Speeding on narrow lanes
2. HGV's ignoring road signage and large agricultural vehicles using inappropriate lanes
3. Drivers of large agricultural vehicles speeding and using mobile phones

Based upon the collated responses from the councils the Police developed the Local Policing Charter which identified the following top three issues

1. Drugs and the threat of county Lines in Shropshire
2. Domestic Abuse
3. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) including ASB use of vehicles

Whilst these are not on our priority list, they are important issues for the Police to focus upon.

Fly Tipping

We continue to get fly tipping in our area which is classed as a criminal offence and can result in heavy fines, imprisonment and confiscation of the vehicle involved. Shropshire Council are responsible for removing waste dumped on public land and also have the ability to prosecute offenders. I therefore urge anyone who witnesses of finds fly tipping to report it to our Parish Clerk or Shropshire Council.

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On a positive note, the Police have implemented local surgeries, the last being on 22nd April at Upton Magna café, where local people can meet their police team and discuss any issues they may have.

We are Neighbourhood watch area but do not have a coordinator so I would again appeal for one of our parishioners to fulfil this role in order to liaise with the local Police team.

Finally

- I wish to thank my fellow Parish Councillors and out Clerk for their efforts and support over the last 8 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.
- Councillor Stone for representing the PC in the organisation of the Queens Jubilee event in June to which we have made a £300 donation.
- Mention should also be made of Lisa Sutherland who set up a village “WhatsApp” group to help keep people informed on issues in the Parish. I am pleased to say that this group continues to provide useful information on general activities and would recommend anyone who has not yet joined to contact Lisa.
- The PC were asked to nominate 2 parishioners to attend the High Sherriff of Shropshire Annual Summer Lunch who had carried out outstanding service to their community. We nominated
 1. Jon Scutt for his work on the PCC, general good work for the community and ensuring parishioners receive regular communications on local activities.
 2. Marion Hillaby for her work for the foodbank in Shrewsbury and general good works for the Church and Withington.

2022/F Report from Cllr Lezley Picton

Report from Cllr Lezley Picton postponed until Annual Parish Council Meeting

2022/G Public Forum

A notice on the Rodington road says that the road will be closed for 3 days from 16th May by Severn Trent. The Clerk has not received notice of the closure. **Action:** Clerk to find out which part of the road is closed.

It was reported that the two “Withington” signs need repairing. **Action:** Clerk to report to Shropshire Council.

It was noted that there weren’t any “Withington” signs on the Walcot Lees/Barkers Square road. **Action:** Clerk to contact Shropshire Council.

2022/H Date of next Annual Village Meeting Wednesday 10th May 2023

Closure of meeting.

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Chairman