

Withington Annual Village Meeting

**Wednesday 7th May 2025
at 7.00pm
in the Parish Room**

Minutes

2025/A Present: Councillors Phil Heath (Chair), Joe Ford, Lesley Stone, Martin Timmis, Alan Williams, Cllr Brendan Mallon (Tern Ward), Denise Roscoe (Clerk) and 10 members of the public

2025/B Welcome: Cllr Heath welcomed everyone

2025/C Apologies: Jon Scutt, Brenda Marshall, Michael & June Prater, Stuart Jones, Steve & Yvonne Walton

2025/D Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Village Meeting 8th May 2024

The Chairman signed the minutes.

2025/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
- Infrastructure
 - Roads and traffic
 - Utilities
- Crime

Planning.

The Shropshire Council Local Plan continues to state that Withington is classed as “Open Countryside which means 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. With the Labour Governments focus on building new houses, we await any impact this may have on the current Plan.

Previously Shropshire Council would notify immediate neighbours of any planning application but no longer do so Your PC consider this to be unfair and therefore have committed to informing parishioners of any planning application that may affect them.

We always encourage anyone who intends to submit a planning application to discuss their plans with neighbours before doing so in order that any potential issues can be identified and hopefully resolved amicably before submission.

There have been a small number of application for remodelling/extending of existing houses. Each has been sent to the PC and we have notified and discussed these with immediate neighbours and reviewed them in PC meetings before submitting our comments to SC.

Most are approved by SC Planning department, but some have been refused notably.

- The Lees near Walcot – mixed equine and agricultural storage
- Rowan House in Withington – 3 bay detached garage and single-story extension

Solar Farm

I will include in this section an update on the Solar Farm being built on land belonging to Church Farm which was approved in 2023. The original application was made by Elgin Energy who in November 2024 sold the project to Severn Trent Green Power (STGP)

Minutes confirmed as correct 6 May 2026

Chairman

STGP attended our PC meeting on 5th March 2024 to introduce themselves and provide an update on the project timescales. Work is currently envisaged to start in August/September 2025 and the project connection date to the National Grid is expected to be in March 2027. They confirmed that they are legally obliged to adhere to the planning approval conditions and that they will also be honouring the Community Benefit Fund contract negotiated between the PC and Elgin Energy that will result on £100,000 being paid to the PC to be used on projects that will benefit parishioners. They will be invited to attend a PC meeting July to provide an update to the plan

Potholes

The condition of the lanes around Withington still remains a concern even though Shropshire Council occasionally patch and repair potholes. Many of the roads need to be swept and these have been reported to SC but unfortunately, they do not do this regularly as we need. Parishioners who discover new potholes and damage to the verges resulting in potholes in the verge should report them as soon as possible in the first instance to Shropshire Council via the "Fix my Street" web site and our Clerk before they become an even bigger problem.

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 ensuring 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.

We have this year, for the first time, agreed to hire the services of a local farmer to clear the "grips" between the road and the drains near Hucksters Cottage to reduce flooding on the bend which is dangerous for traffic in both directions.

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 work carried out by the PC with CJ Wild birdseed over recent years has resulted in far fewer instances of HGV's driving 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.

Sewerage.

Withington has suffered recently from sewage overflows, particularly between Bake House Yard and The Old Vicarage, when excessive rainfall has occurred. Due to the perseverance of Gail Robinson, who has enlisted the support of our local MP Julia Buckley, Philip Smith, together with the PC, in reporting and following up with both Severn Trent and the Environmental Agency work has been carried out to inspect and clear the drainage system through the village. Whilst this has improved the situation it has not totally solved the problem as the system is considered to be at capacity. The problem will continue to be monitored and reported.

Thankfully the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan has dropped the idea of building 300 plus houses in Rodington Heath which would have had drastic consequences for the sewerage system through Withington.

High Speed Broadband

In 2024 company called Kloud9 proposed to implement a high-speed broadband infrastructure in Withington. Their proposal was strongly opposed by parishioners due to their approach of installing a number of new poles rather than using the existing poles. The role of PC is not to support one commercial supplier over however we did support the installation of a high-speed broadband

infrastructure. The only other seriously interested provider was Openreach who proposed using the existing pole infrastructure.

A resident working party, led by Gail Robinson and supported by the PC, was created to generate sufficient commitment from parishioners to enable Openreach to commit to an implementation in Withington.

The project has been very successful, and a number of residents have now moved to high-speed broadband.

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 agreed at the last PC meeting that the 3 key issues for the parish are:

1. Speeding

There appears little we can do about speeding in the lanes outside the village as the limit is set at 60MPH. However, the law states, in the Highway Code, that the speed driven should be appropriate for the road and consideration should be given to pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists.

2. 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. I therefore urge anyone who witnesses of finds fly tipping to report it in the first instance to Shropshire Council on the "Fix my Street" web site and our Clerk.

Our main issue on the police charter is fly tipping on private land where the Council will not remove it and the cost of removal lies with the landowner which seems very unfair.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those parishioners who take it upon themselves to carry out litter picking activities along our lanes which seem to have become a dumping ground for litter from passing vehicles.

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. Such activity led recently to a vehicle being abandoned one night in a local field after it became bogged down. 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.
- Neil Maxwell who is retiring from the PC having served as a councillor for the last 8 years.
- Gail Robinson and Philip Smith for their efforts with ST regarding the sewage overflows/flooding
- Gail Robinson for her work leading the residents working party on the implementation of high-speed broadband.
- 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 purchase a new mower.
- Councillor Stone for organising the recent event on the Village Green to celebrate VE Day which raised money for the Village Green.

Cllr Mallon introduced himself and explained that as the Tern Councillor his responsibility is to work for and represent the Parish Councils in the ward by raising their issues and concerns with Shropshire Council with the aim to getting a solution. At this point his work is not political.

Brendan has lived in and around Shrewsbury for almost 20 years. He is a RAF veteran and commercial aviator.

2025/G Public Forum

Cllrs raised the following issues

- Community News request for a donation
- Updating the Withington Parish Plan
- Risk Management to be included as a regular item on the Parish Council Agendas to monitor progress.

Cllrs resolved that the items would be included on the July PC meeting agenda.

2025/H Date of next Annual Village Meeting Wednesday 6th May 2026

Closure of meeting.