Clerk's Report – November 2026

November has been a particularly busy month, with a significant proportion of my time dedicated to the planning and delivery of the village Christmas programme alongside routine Council business, project work, governance matters and community engagement activities.

Governance & Administration:

Following the November meeting, I notified Halo Leisure of the Council's resolution regarding the proposed Severn Centre funding partnership. I have commenced work on the development of a formal Reserves Policy, reserve structure and associated financial planning arrangements to support Council consideration and future budget setting. The casual councillor vacancy remains advertised. No applications were received for co-option at the November meeting. A Subject Access Request (SAR) was received and responded to within the required timescales. I also attended training and briefing sessions during the month, including the NALC AI Forum, Youth Transformation Project meetings, SALC AGM, the Sport England Funding Seminar and online meetings of the Place Universal Offer Steering Group.

Youth Transformation Project

The Youth Transformation Project survey has continued throughout the month. Concerns were raised regarding the methodology used during a pilot engagement exercise, particularly around approaches made directly to young people within the village and associated safeguarding considerations.
These concerns were raised urgently with the Youth Working Group, which reviewed the matter and ensured that appropriate safeguarding expectations and procedures were clarified with relevant parties. The Working Group continues to support the development of youth provision opportunities within Highley and engagement with Shropshire Council and delivery partners.

Community & Highways Matters

Following a request from Shropshire Council, I arranged for information to be shared via social media regarding parking on the grass verge at Coronation Street/Rhea Hall.
The subsequent post generated comments from a small number of residents, including concerns regarding the potential displacement of parking into neighbouring residential streets, particularly Whittle Close. Correspondents were advised that parking enforcement, highway management and parking provision remain matters for Shropshire Council, and that concerns, suggestions and requests for action should be directed to the Highway Authority. I continue to pursue outstanding highways matters on behalf of residents, including further correspondence regarding the flashing warning sign on the approach to the school.

Remembrance 2026

The Remembrance Parade event was successfully delivered across the parish with excellent attendance and community participation. I would like to extend thanks to all veterans, volunteers, businesses, councillors, staff, uniformed organisations, community groups, residents and partner organisations who contributed to the commemorations. Particular thanks are due to The Severn Centre for opening outside of its normal operating hours to support the event. A professional photographer attended and a selection of images have been shared for local, historical and community use. A debrief report and recommendations for future events has been sent. The annual poppy displays and associated Remembrance installations have now been removed and stored for future use.

Christmas Programme

A substantial proportion of my time throughout November has been dedicated to the organisation and delivery of the Highley Christmas Lights Switch-On event taking place on 28 November. This has included coordination with contractors, entertainers, volunteers, printers, prize donors, community groups, publicity providers and partner organisations to ensure the event is delivered safely and successfully.
Christmas lights installation has been arranged in readiness for the event, whilst promotional activity and ticket sales have continued through Council communication channels and community partners.
The Council's annual Christmas raffle has again attracted considerable support from local businesses through generous donations of prizes, vouchers and experiences for residents. Whilst the raffle was slower to start than anticipated and therefore not all donations are reflected on the printed tickets, the level of community support has once again been exceptional and thanks to new councillor Smith for her extra work on this alongside the events team. Preparations have also been undertaken for the second annual "Santa at the Centre" event. This community initiative will once again raise funds in support of the local Fire Service whilst providing an affordable festive experience for local families. A full report on both Christmas events will be presented following their completion.

Environment & Public Realm

During November, members of the Environmental Working Group and community volunteers participated in a number of environmental improvement activities across the parish. Volunteer-led litter picking sessions have continued to support efforts to maintain the appearance of the village, whilst community tree planting events have been organised to enhance biodiversity and contribute to longer-term environmental improvements within Highley. HPC remains extremely grateful to all residents and volunteers who continue to support these initiatives and give their time to helping keep Highley looking its best. Fly-tipping, environmental maintenance and graffiti reports continue to be monitored and forwarded to the appropriate agencies and partners where necessary.

Best Kept Village Competition

I have continued to pursue arrangements relating to the parish's Best Kept Village success, including resolving administrative requirements associated with receipt of the competition prize money.

Work is ongoing to ensure that the achievement is appropriately promoted and that opportunities arising from the award are maximised for the benefit of the community.

Community Support & Engagement

I have started to bring together partner organisations, statutory agencies and community groups to coordinate support arrangements relating to the placement of refugee families within Highley, helping to ensure that appropriate services, information and community support are available as required.
I have also provided direct support to residents experiencing significant personal difficulties. During the month, I assisted a local resident facing exceptional challenges following a recent cancer diagnosis shortly after giving birth. Through contacts developed via the Community Drop-In initiative, I was able to signpost and help facilitate access to counselling, wellbeing services and wider support networks.
Following personal circumstances, I have temporarily stepped back from operating my Facebook page and as such associated pages with it including HPC, Chelmarsh Folk, Highley Connect and others that I manage. I am grateful to those councillors who have supported community events and information sharing during this period. Whilst community engagement through social media remains an important tool, maintaining an active online presence can be both emotionally demanding and time-consuming, and I can assure council that this will only be a temporary but necessary measure, and sincere thanks to those helping support our social media presence during this hiatus. During my time managing the Highley Parish Council Facebook page, the audience has grown by over 1,000 followers, helping to increase awareness of Council activities, events and community initiatives.

Finally, Councillors and guests attending the Council's Christmas social evening are reminded that this will take place at the newly refurbished Miners Arms on Friday 11 December from 7.00pm. Christmas jumpers are optional 🎄