

SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

Division: Highley, Billingsley, Middleton Scriven, Glazeley & Deuxhill

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY - OCTOBER 2026

October focused on progressing outstanding highways and road adoption work, Severn Centre funding and residents' planning concerns. I also met council officers about local investment opportunities, traffic restrictions and the council's improvement programme.

The key developments were the 23 October Highways meeting about Netherton Lane ford, identification of the remaining Hitchen's Way adoption works and new arrangements to strengthen Audit Committee oversight. The report distinguishes completed activity from decisions, inspections and works still outstanding.

1. MEETINGS AND ACTIVITY THIS MONTH

Date	Activity
15 October	Attended the LGA masterclass on the roles and responsibilities of Audit Committee members.
23 October	Met Shropshire Council Highways about Netherton Lane ford, warning signs and repair options.
October	Met Traffic Management about B4363 speed restrictions and traffic counts; discussed external survey costs and the lack of remaining council budget.
October	Met Gemma Lawley about adoption of Colliers Way, Hitchen's Way and Staley Grove.
October	Met Hannah Thomas to clarify how the Place Universal Offer funding is used.
October	Met Kim Bromley-Derry, Chair of the Improvement Board, about governance and information sharing.
October	Held first monthly meeting with Chief Executive Tanya and the Audit Committee Vice-Chair on KPIs, improvement reporting and audit follow-up.

2. UPDATE ON KEY ACTIONS FROM MY PREVIOUS REPORT

Previous action	October update	Next step
Netherton Lane / Bynd Lane ford	• Met Highways on 23 October. • Requested advance "Ford Ahead" warning signs. • Further inspection and spring resurfacing proposed.	Chase the inspection findings, signage decision and resurfacing timetable.
Ford depth gauge	• Installation remains unconfirmed.	Chase Highways to confirm installation or obtain a date.
Coronation Street / Arley View Close signs	• Replacement signs were installed in September.	Close unless residents report a further issue.
Vicarage Lane sign	• Corrected sign reordered to include house numbers through No. 38. • Delivery and fitting dates awaited.	Chase delivery and installation dates; check the sign once fitted.
Hitchen's Way road adoption	• Severn Trent identified works for Taylor Wimpey; works underway. • Linked developer to Adoptions Team for inspection and works schedule.	Chase inspection, written works schedule and adoption timetable.



Previous action	October update	Next step
Hitchen's Way / FirstPort	• Replacement company needed for balancing pond and TP1 transfers. • At least 50% resident support required to change provider. • Seeking agreement by letter.	Identify replacement provider and write to residents for agreement.
B4363 speed limit / Glazeley signage	• Met Traffic Management. • Pneumatic tube survey would be parish funded; contractor cost exceeds £800 per end.	Obtain written quote; discuss funding with parish council and chase alternatives.
Glazeley footbridge – Borle Brook	• Chased officers about repair/reinstatement. • No reply received.	Chase a substantive response and proposed timescale.
Silverwoods	• No new enforcement outcome confirmed.	Monitor and seek an update if new concerns arise.
Malt Shovel / The Edge	• Compiled 22-question, multi-service evidence dossier. • Circulated for factual review.	Complete review, refer to officers and chase responses.
Audit & Governance	• Met Improvement Board Chair and Chief Executive. • Discussed KPIs and clearer Internal Audit action reporting.	Press for officer action tracking, milestones and evidence of completion.

3. HIGHLEY PARISH: HIGHWAYS AND ROAD ADOPTION

3.1 Netherton Lane / Bynd Lane Ford

At my 23 October meeting with Highways, I explained that larger vehicles can commit to Netherton Lane before seeing the ford warning, leaving insufficient space to turn back. The condition of the ford and its approaches remains a concern.

Following consideration of other measures, including barriers, I requested advance "Ford Ahead" signs at both ends of the lane. These should allow unsuitable vehicles to divert earlier, reducing heavy vehicle use and further damage. Highways planned another inspection within two weeks of our meeting.

Resurfacing is proposed for spring 2027, when lower water flow should improve working conditions and the durability of the repair. I will chase the inspection findings, the decision on signage and the repair timetable. Neither the signs nor resurfacing has yet been confirmed as completed.

3.2 Road Adoption – Hitchen's Way, Colliers Way and Staley Grove

Severn Trent has identified the remedial works required of Taylor Wimpey for Hitchen's Way, and the developer is undertaking them. I introduced Taylor Wimpey's contact directly to Shropshire Council's Highways Adoptions Team. They are arranging an inspection and a schedule of remaining highway works; I will follow up for a written programme and adoption timetable.

At my meeting with Gemma Lawley, she explained that Colliers Way is furthest advanced and is expected to be progressed first, followed by Hitchen's Way. Staley Grove is likely to be more difficult because the developer has gone bankrupt, complicating outstanding obligations.

This provides a likely sequence, not confirmed adoption dates. I will continue pressing for progress and updates on each road.

3.3 Hitchen's Way – FirstPort / Estate Management

Estate management remains separate from highway adoption. An alternative management company is needed to maintain the balancing pond and process TP1 transfers. I understand FirstPort can be replaced if at least 50% of residents agree. I am seeking agreement on the next steps by letter and will identify a suitable replacement provider.



4. HIGHLEY PARISH: COMMUNITY SERVICES AND PLANNING

4.1 COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FUNDING

4.1.1 Severn Centre Community Hub

I challenged the proposed withdrawal of approximately £55,000 annual funding from the Severn Centre Community Hub, including concerns about how local members were consulted. Replacement funding has since been negotiated. I will monitor its implementation and the implications for services used by residents.

4.1.2 Place Universal Offer

I met Hannah Thomas to clarify whether the Place Universal Offer brings direct funding to Highley. She explained that it does not provide a ring-fenced allocation to the village. Funding through Energize supports the council to identify local needs and seek possible grants.

This is funding for research and grant development, not an approved Highley project budget. I will seek opportunities to turn that work into applications for local investment.

4.2 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

4.2.1 Malt Shovel / The Edge and Adjoining Sites

I compiled a coordinated planning and environmental compliance review of The Malt Shovel/The Edge, adjoining caravan land and The Castle, drawing together residents' reports, photographs, planning history and other evidence. It contains 22 specific questions for the appropriate council services.

The questions cover structures and planning permissions, gates and signage, decking, lighting, smoke, outdoor events and noise, ecology, food hygiene, licensing, housing use and conservation matters. Bringing these together should allow a more coordinated officer response.

The dossier has been circulated for factual checking ahead of referral. These are reported concerns requiring investigation; the report does not assert that breaches have been established. I will follow up with the relevant departments.

5. BILLINGSLEY, DEUXHILL, GLAZELEY AND MIDDLETON SCRIVEN PARISH COUNCIL

5.1 B4363 – Speed Restrictions and Traffic Surveys

I met Traffic Management about the B4363 speed-limit and signage concerns in Glazeley. Officers advised that traffic surveys using pneumatic traffic-counting tubes would need parish council funding: an external contractor undertakes the work and the council has no remaining budget for these surveys.

The indicative cost is over £800 for each end of the road section surveyed. I will ask for a written survey specification and quotation, raise the funding position with the parish council and chase Traffic Management about any alternative assessment or signage options.

5.2 Glazeley Footbridge – Borle Brook

I chased the relevant officers again for an update on the proposed repair or reinstatement of the Borle Brook footbridge. No response has been received. I will continue seeking a substantive update and expected timescale.

6. AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

6.1 Meeting with the Improvement Board Chair

I met Kim Bromley-Derry, Chair of the Shropshire Council Improvement Board, to discuss its priorities and information sharing with the Audit Committee. I raised the possibility of Audit Committee representation on the Board so members can better understand the wider improvement programme and the evidence behind reported progress.

6.2 Monthly Meeting with the Chief Executive

The Audit Committee Vice-Chair and I held our first monthly meeting with Tanya, the Chief Executive. We discussed the Improvement Board and the reporting and tracking of KPIs relating to CIPFA, the Best Value Notice and Grant Thornton's external audit findings.



We discussed a standing update at the start of each Audit Committee meeting, showing officer action, deadlines and evidence of progress against Internal Audit recommendations. This is a proposed improvement to reporting, not yet a confirmed process.

6.3 Grant Thornton External Audit

Grant Thornton's interim 2025/26 external audit report is due at extraordinary Full Council on 5 November and Audit & Governance Committee later in the month. Its two statutory recommendations concern a sustainable financial recovery programme and urgent improvements to corporate governance and assurance.

The seven key recommendations address transformation and savings; the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit; internal controls; risk management; workforce capacity; governance of STAR Housing and CDL; and procurement and contract management. Three improvement recommendations address overview and scrutiny, performance reporting, and SEND/EHCP timeliness.

As Audit Committee Chair, I will press for clear responsibility, milestones, measurable indicators and evidence that agreed actions have addressed the underlying issues.

6.4 Audit Committee Member Training

On 15 October I attended the Local Government Association masterclass on Audit Committee members' roles and responsibilities, covering governance, assurance and members' oversight duties.

7. RESIDENT CASEWORK AND LOCAL ISSUES

I continued handling resident enquiries and progressing open casework on highways, planning, drainage, rights of way and community services. I will pursue outstanding replies and escalate issues where necessary. I am also monitoring for any new Boyer planning application; the September consultation is not repeated here as an October event.

8. ACTIONS AND MEETINGS FOR NOVEMBER

Issue / Meeting	Next action	Owner / follow-up
3 November – Internal Audit Team	Attend meeting and discuss assurance, open recommendations and action tracking.	Sharon / Internal Audit
Highley Parish Council	Attend meeting this week and report on local casework and progress.	Sharon
Billingsley Parish Council	Attend meeting this week and review parish issues.	Sharon
5 November – Extraordinary Full Council	Consider Grant Thornton external-audit report and statutory recommendations.	Full Council
26 November – Audit & Governance	Review the audit findings, governance implications and action-monitoring arrangements.	Audit Committee
Netherton Lane ford and depth gauge	Chase the site inspection, advance warning signs, ford depth gauge and resurfacing plan.	Sharon / Highways
Colliers Way, Hitchen's Way and Staley Grove	Get the inspection, written works list and progress on all three road adoptions.	Sharon / Adoptions / developer
Hitchen's Way – estate management	Identify managing-company options and seek residents' agreement by letter.	Sharon / residents
Vicarage Lane sign	Chase Highways for delivery and installation dates for the reordered sign, and check accuracy after installation.	Sharon / Highways
B4363 / Glazeley speed restrictions	Obtain contractor quote, discuss parish funding and pursue signage options.	Sharon / Traffic Management / parish council



Issue / Meeting	Next action	Owner / follow-up
Borle Brook footbridge	Chase a response on repair or reinstatement.	Sharon / relevant officers
Planning applications and Silverwoods	Monitor Silverwoods and check for any new Boyer planning application.	Sharon / Planning
Malt Shovel / The Edge	Complete factual review, refer compliance questions to relevant officers and request responses.	Sharon / relevant services
Council improvement reporting	Press for KPIs, named owners, deadlines and action-closure evidence.	Audit Chair / Vice-Chair / officers

9. CONTACT INFORMATION

Councillor Sharon Ritchie-Simmons

Shropshire Councillor for Highley, Billingsley, Middleton Scriven, Glazeley & Deuxhill

Email: Sharon.Ritchie-Simmons@shropshire.gov.uk

Mobile/WhatsApp: 0750 009 0071

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/Clr.Sharon.Ritchie.Simmons

Website: https://www.cllrsharonritchiesimmons.co.uk/

Residents are welcome to contact me about local issues, council services, highways, planning concerns, community safety, environmental matters or any issue where help is needed to identify the right route through Shropshire Council.