



County Councillor Report Oct 2025 – Sharon Ritchie-Simmons

Presented to Highley Parish Council

Date: Tuesday, 4th November 2025

Division: Highley – Shropshire Council

This report provides an overview of my work during October 2025. I have continued to address local concerns, represent residents in committee meetings, and keep a close watch on Shropshire Council's financial position.

LOCAL ISSUES

Resident Casework

1. I have continued to support residents with a range of local concerns this month. One case involved an elderly resident whose fence and garden have been damaged by a neighbour's shed and overgrown leylandii. I provided step-by-step guidance and a formal letter template referencing relevant high-hedge legislation to help them seek resolution.
2. Following a series of incidents on the footpath that continues from Hawthorn Drive to the main road—including a mobility scooter accident and a fall involving a resident with visual impairment—I have raised the issue with Shropshire Council Highways, requesting that this section be addressed as soon as possible.
3. I am also assisting a 77-year-old resident to obtain a Blue Badge. The current process with SC takes 15 weeks which is unacceptable and excludes evidence from a GP, which in this case makes the application process unnecessarily difficult. I am challenging Shropshire Council's policy of refusing to take supporting evidence from a resident's own GP, who is often the most appropriate medical professional to confirm mobility issues.
4. Another resident I have supported to help them stay connected and manage online services independently through the personal donation of a laptop.

Transport and Accessibility

Public transport remains a key local issue. I continue to engage with Diamond Buses to secure timetable adjustments that better serve Highley. Despite ongoing diversions due to the Bewdley Bridge closure, I have stressed that the timetable must still be reviewed and improved now, given that the disruption will persist for several months.

Highways and Maintenance

1. Reports of unpleasant odours in Kinlet View and Netherton Lane returned this month. Severn Trent investigated, identified a cracked manhole cover as the cause, and carried out repair work on 30 October 2025. I pushed for the repair to be expedited and will continue to monitor the situation.
2. Essential carriageway repairs were undertaken by Multevo Ltd on behalf of Shropshire Council on Hazelwells Road under a temporary closure on 29–30 October 2025. Access was maintained for residents, emergency vehicles, and essential personnel throughout. The white line refresh at Haggs Corner is also scheduled as part of the same maintenance programme.
3. In addition, I reported a hedge obstructing road visibility for drivers on the secondary road behind The Castle Pub on Woodhill Road. Shropshire Council Highways has confirmed the trimming is scheduled in its upcoming maintenance programme, with regular inspections to continue until the work is completed.



Planning and Development

After receiving concerns from residents at my October Councillor Clinic I submitted an objection to planning application 25/03806/FUL (formerly 25/03482/REM) on Cockshutt Lane, which proposes two two-storey dwellings. My objection focused on overdevelopment, unsuitable access, and the loss of privacy and green character. I have asked that the original single-storey design be upheld to preserve the area's setting and safety.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

At the Cabinet meeting on 15 October 2025, several key items were discussed:

- The Highways Future Operating Model report was approved, confirming that the Council will continue its existing partnership with Kier for the next few months while further options for the long-term operating model are developed. This approach provides continuity of service while future delivery structures and efficiency measures are explored.
- The Cabinet also approved the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaint Handling Code, which will take effect from 1 April 2026, ensuring a consistent and transparent process across services.
- The Council's Period 5 Financial Monitoring Report highlighted a forecast overspend of £35.531 million, with only 57% of planned savings achieved so far. Cabinet directed urgent action to reduce non-essential spending and increase income.
- The Draft Financial Strategy for 2026/27–2030/31 was also discussed, with officers instructed to develop savings options to achieve a balanced budget for 2026/27 and to continue pursuing Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from central government.

The Council's financial position remains extremely challenging, and I will continue to monitor how this may impact local services and capital projects affecting Highley.

LOOKING AHEAD

Next month I will:

1. Follow up on the requested repair for the **Hawthorn Drive footpath**.
2. Maintain pressure on **Diamond Buses** to adjust their timetable despite the ongoing diversion.
3. Pursue my **challenge to Shropshire Council's Blue Badge policy**, particularly around evidence acceptance.
4. Monitor progress on the **scheduled hedge trimming and white line refresh works**.
5. Provide updates on **Shropshire Council's financial position** and any implications for Highley.

Finally, I want to express my support for the **Local Government Association's national initiative promoting civility, safety, and respect in public life**. Having personally experienced abuse in my role, I fully endorse the LGA's call for stronger action to protect councillors and officers from intimidation and harassment. Constructive dialogue and respect are vital to preserving democracy at every level.

UPCOMING COUNCIL MEETINGS

- Economy & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Thursday 13 November 2025, 2:00 pm
- Cabinet – Wednesday 19 November 2025, 10:30 am
- Audit & Governance Committee – Thursday 27 November 2025, 10:00 am
- Full Council – Thursday 11 December 2025, 10:00 am

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