



## Highley Annual Parish Meeting

**Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026 5.30pm**

### **Present**

There were 29 members of public present.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

SNT – separate email.

Alex Edwards, H. Hancox, Lin Evans, R Williams, PC Jade Ives, PC Nick Nolan.

### **2. Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting**

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 8th April 2025.

### **Reports**

#### **3. Report from the Chair of Highley Parish Council - Councillor Tom Quinn**

Good Afternoon and welcome to the 2026 Highley Annual Parish Meeting. For those who don't know me, I am Tom Quinn, Chairman of Highley Parish Council.

It is always an honour to stand here at the Annual Parish Meeting to deliver this report and to let you know of all the exciting things Highley Parish Council has been up to over the last twelve months. It was a privilege last May to be re-elected as Chairman of the Parish Council, my third year as Chairman. Highley Parish Council continues to evolve both as part of our own continual improvement but also in reaction to external factors such as changes at Shropshire Council or from the government at a national level.

Last May saw significant changes in Shropshire – the administration of the Unitary Council changed from Conservative to Liberal Democrat and our local councillor changed from Mark Williams who represented the Lib Dems, to Sharon Ritchie-Simmons of the Reform party. The change in controlling party coupled with the significant financial pressures on Shropshire Council has led to an interesting and potentially quite challenging time within local government and one which has forced us to be prepared for even more challenging times to come. Whilst the political landscape around us has been shifting, Highley Parish Council's focus has remained constant: doing the best for the people of Highley regardless of changes in Shrewsbury or Westminster.

I'd like to reflect on some of the highlights from the last year – all our usual events went as well as they ever have, some would say they were the best yet! Regular dates in the diary like the Carnival, the Remembrance Day parade and the Christmas light switch on which includes the Civic Awards were all great successes. I was honoured to be able to represent the Parish Council at the events and to present prizes to award or competition winners including Highley In Bloom and, new for last year, our Christmas Light competition.

I have also had opportunities this year to talk to lots of people about Highley Parish Council and my role as Chairman. I spoke with the Allsorts group and recently undertook a challenging Q&A session from year 3 and 4 at Highley School. We also welcomed some high profile visitors to the village this year, the most important of which was Sir Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer who visited to see our redeveloped medical centre here at The Severn Centre, it was a proud moment to show a national figure that Highley is leading the way in rural healthcare provision. I also officially reopened our Community Drop In Event which has been a great success since it was founded, providing information to people who need it and signposting them to the most appropriate service for their needs. At the opening event I proudly cut the ribbon, a first for me!

The highlight of the last year for me was attending the awards ceremony for Shropshire's Best Kept Village. Hearing Highley read out as the winner of "Best Kept Village – South" filled my heart with pride and it was an honour to say a few words at the ceremony. We will be entering the competition again this year with an eye on "Best in County".

In addition to all the great things which have happened in the village over the last year there have also been some very sad events. 2026 started with the tragic loss of two local young men who took their own lives. A devastating loss to the village and a stark demonstration of the importance of Men's Mental Health. Last night saw the first meeting of Men Walking and Talking – Highley, a group designed to provide a safe space for men to attend and just have a chat. The first event went fantastically well and the rain even held off for the walk. I look forward to many more.

As we look forward to the rest of 2026 and beyond we will continue to do our best for the people of Highley, to ensure Highley's voice is loudly heard by Shropshire Council in Shrewsbury and to fight for our services. As I mentioned earlier these are challenging times but not without opportunity. We are optimistic about the potential to do more within the village and to deliver more services locally, we are exploring ways to take more local control, delivering services which are not only better quality but also offer greater value for money. With the support of my Vice Chair, Clerk and fellow councillors I am confident we can continue to do a great job for the people of Highley.

#### **4. Report from the Safer Neighbourhood Team – PC Jade Ives**

Please accept the sincere apologies of the Safer Neighbourhood Team. Unfortunately, they are unable to attend this evening's Annual Parish Meeting and have also been unable to provide a written report on this occasion.

Over the past month, the team has been heavily committed to a combination of court attendances, urgent operational deployments and pre-booked annual leave, which has significantly reduced their capacity. A few officers have been required at short notice to support ongoing investigations and safeguard vulnerable individuals outside of the immediate village boundary, which has had to take priority over the usual community engagement commitments.

They fully recognise the importance of the Annual Parish Meeting and their regular updates to Highley Parish Council and are genuinely disappointed not to be with you this evening. They remain committed to working closely with the council and the community, and will ensure a full update is provided ahead of your next meeting, together with any information you may specifically require.

Thank you for your understanding, and please do not hesitate to let them know if there are particular issues you would like them to address in their next report.

### **5. Report from Head teacher, Highley Primary School – Tom Plim**

- Last year, I gave you a general overview of Highley School and the demographics of our children on roll. I talked about our 3 values of Respect, Relationships and Resilience, and I also spoke about our focus on local heritage and community involvement.
- This year, I wanted to give more of an update on what we've done and achieved this year.
- Our Number On Roll (NOR) has fallen slightly to 236, but we have maintained 10 class groups.
- It was extremely difficult to find an exact date when the school opened, but we believe it to have been the 1975/76 academic year, so this is in fact **Highley School's 50th anniversary**. Because of this, our Year 5 children have commemorated this by creating a lasting piece of artwork with Craven Dunhill at Jackfield Tile Museum – showing our school community and local area.

#### **This year we have focused on developing:**

- We are part of the National Pilot school for 'breakfast club for all' - one of only 700 schools nationally, attendance of breakfast club is around 40 children daily because of this access.
- OPAL playtimes continue to be developed (Outdoor Play And Learning) - giving children access to high-quality play every lunchtime. We have our accreditation later this month.
- We are continuing to work on Zones of Regulation – giving children strategies to help them recognise when they are feeling a particular way **and** how they can return to the 'green' zone
- Continued focus on outdoor learning – Forest School, daily mile, staff training for PE, wildlife area for Early Years
- Year 5s have been involved in Shropshire Bookfest to promote reading and fully immerse themselves into some brand new texts – it is a Shropshire festival, and we have 2 award winners for art and poetry linked to the books they have read
- School are also moving forward with a more cohesive approach to spelling, punctuation and grammar
- Parental engagement remains a huge priority - reading cafes termly, running 'Understanding Your Child' face-to-face in conjunction with Early Help (Strengthening Families), introducing a School Nurse drop-in clinic, together with more 'drop ins' for families to support learning (phonics and early maths being a real focus)
- School are also part of a national pilot called ELSEC where we have Speech and Language therapists working with school (Highley children's start-points are very low, particularly their speech, language and communication).
- Recently, we have accessed a pot of funding for an inclusion hub to run in the morning, very like our nurture group that Nurture Hub funding in the mornings to mirror nurture in the afternoons

#### **Community involvement:**

- Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) – working with the Severn Centre over Easter to create a holiday provision using the Severn Centre's facilities
- Continued use of the swimming pool for Year 5/6 swimming and water safety
- Highley Community Project still provide cereals of our breakfast club
- The Repair Café also operates from our school hall, as does Messy Church
- Continued performances by choir at the light switch on, to the Highley Companions group, representation at the Remembrance Day service

- Bags of Kindness at Christmas time and delivering Harvest produce around the community to vulnerable residents
- Continue to access the Country Park wherever possible plus taking our youngest children to the library here. Strong links with Highley Miners
- Informal nurture – Pages, Pat Whitefoot, Alison Palmer

**Highley 100+ passport:**

- Developed to get children exploring the local area, appreciating what they have on the doorstep.

**6. Report from SYA – All about Youth – Jack Noakes**

Attached separately

**7. Report from Severn Valley Country Park Ranger – Ed Andrews****8. Report from Bridgnorth Community First Responders – James Gittens**

Volunteers for the Bridgnorth team, twelve volunteers trained with WMAS and shared their experiences of the volunteering role and the training they receive and the varied clients that they also attend. Reassurance that although based in Bridgnorth, do cover Highley. The Highley car is based in Stottesdon currently.

**9. Report from Severn Centre Manager – Dan Dyson**

Hello my name is Dan Dyson, I am the new general manager of The Severn Centre. I do not know if I can still be classed as new when I have been here for 6 months. But nevertheless, it is nice to see you all.

Over the last 6 months we have had a few successful events, such as Santa at the centre, halloween and the christmas fate (light switch on). These events brought in a huge footfall—we even ran out of 500 stickers within the hour. These events are great as it allows the community to come to the centre who perhaps may not come normally. A good one we are planning in the future is the Community Connectors meeting at the end of June.

We are planning on having a busier timetable as I recognise the issues with staffing issues last year, so we have had a few people join our team and upskill current members of staff to allow for a busier timetable to allow the public more opportunities to swim. Be that lanes, family swims or quiet swims

We have increased our activities over the half term keeping it £1 a play to allow people to spend time at the centre for cheap.

I'm also looking at our open spaces to see how we can support local entrepreneurs and instructors to grow their own businesses here.

We are planning for a lot of different agencies and activities for our Big Open Day on the 9th May, such as taster sessions into swim lessons, bringing a friend for free to the gym and more £1 a play. Plus many more

Planning on opening the pool 1st May and opening longer till the end of September. Increasing the number of days the swim lessons are available to hope to bring more people potentially to lessons here. Focusing on the crash

courses done during the half terms and use of Rookie Lifeguarding to gain peoples interest in either becoming lifeguards, increasing their swimming skills or learning new 1st aid skills. We will be ending the season with a dog swim and an aquathon

I am looking forward to the summer and seeing what more we can introduce new aspects and working with the groups already at the centre to create healthier Communities

#### **10. Report from Highley table Tennis Club – Mel Mitchell**

Mel represented Rob as team captain for two of the table tennis teams and shared the success of the club teams, and the meeting times and costs. Season starts in October and welcome new players. Thanks to the Parish Council for supporting the club.

#### **11. Report from Highley Carnival – Hayley Fulton**

No report offered no apologies received.

#### **12. Report from Pop-In Club – Dale Schnelting**

Dale spoke clearly about the Pop-In Club, which first began in 1974 and continues to meet a real need in the village. Attendance has grown from around 20 to 37 regular members each week, meeting every Monday except bank holidays. Many of those attending had very little social contact during Covid, and the club now gives them a much-needed space to chat, catch up, socialise and enjoy a weekly game of bingo. Nineteen of the ladies are widows living alone, and it's been wonderful to see how they have flourished — gaining confidence, forming friendships and now regularly attending other clubs, lunch groups and village events. Dale expressed sincere thanks to the Parish Council for supporting the club through its recent grant application.

#### **13. Report from Highley Welfare Football Club – Gary G**

Gary thanked HPC for funding towards the goals, the under 18s team are currently training outside and continue to grow and build the club right from the Mini Kickers aged 3 and 4 up to the newly formed adult team. Gary shared information about the weekend tournament in June which will be more of a family event this year with inflatables, food stalls etc.

#### **14. Report from Highley Companions – Elaine Moore**

Attached separately

#### **15. Report from HPC Environment/LNRS Group – Alistair Macnaughton**

Highley Parish council environment and Local Nature Recovery Strategy group annual review 2026.

Since annual review 2025, environment sub committee split from the village maintenance group, and have met (under the name of the LNRS Local Nature Recovery Strategy group) monthly since. We are continuing to work together to improve biodiversity in our village, and trying to focus on expanding our skill set so that we can tackle the nature crisis from many angles. So far we have:

- Recruited new members following ‘why nature matters’ conference.
- Ran a stall at Highley Carnival 2025, providing wildflower seeds to children and making bird boxes with youngsters from recycled materials. We will continue with this eco theme at the next carnival.
- Continued planting trees at various locations (garden village green, Severn centre etc.) including old varieties of apple trees provided by local resident Terence Hayward).
- Mapped nature corridors and habitats of parish to update official LNRS map, which was lacking certain features. This is helping to identify new nature corridors which are important for wildlife recovery.
- Met with local landowner, Dan Maiden, who has agreed to plant a new hedge to increase the length of a nature corridor to help boost local wildlife.
- Completed several litter picks around the village and will continue this.
- Finalised installation of a 'litter free' sign at either end of the village, featuring a hedgehog.
- Progressing a ‘dark sky project’ to encourage reduction of light pollution in the village.

Working with the church to improve our wildlife habitats and how the community interacts with them.

- A member has attended a verges conference, which has initiated a new verges project, where we have litter picked, surveyed to identify current wildflower species, and made progress to stop mowing on the verge.

Secured more free trees to improve nature corridors in the parish and are planning to get our volunteers trained in hedge laying, which is perfect for improving biodiversity without machines.

**16. Additional Community Group Reports**

There were no additional groups wishing to speak

**17. Open Forum**

An opportunity for parish residents to raise matters of interest or concern.

**18. Meeting Close**

**Signed:**

**dated:**

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