HIGHLEY PARISH COUNCIL - MINUTES

Tuesday 6 October 2026, 7.00pm

Councillors: T. Quinn (Chair) T Pinches (Vice-Chair) J Marshall, D Thakrar, S Bunn, L Crocombe, C Whitehouse, L. Hodnett, J. Smith, D Renshaw.

Clerk: A Palmer **County Councillors:** S Ritchie-Simmons

Members of Public: There were 8 members of public

FC26-27.65 – Chair's Welcome

The Chair invited members to observe a one-minute silence in honour of Councillor Chris Stanley, who sadly passed away last month.

FC26-27.66 – Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED to accept apologies from Cllrs A. Hancox, E Aspin, Cllr H. Hancox (resigned).

No apologies received from Cllr M. Roberts.

Power: Local Government Act 1972, s.85. *Reasons provided verbally to the Clerk/Chair are not minuted to safeguard councillor privacy.*

FC26-27.67 – Declarations of Interest

Power: Localism Act 2011, s.31 Members must leave the room where required.

FC26-27.68 – Parishioners' Question Time

MOP1 Raised ongoing concerns regarding the Malt Shovel Inn, noting that Planning Enforcement is already aware of issues on the site and expressing worry about the backlog of enforcement casework. Concerns included: Illuminated signage and potential impact on bats, referencing recent coverage on *Countryfile,* and possible unapproved name change and perceived lack of monitoring.

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Cllr Ritchie-Simmons was invited to respond. She outlined previous enforcement actions at the site, including instances where MOP1 stated a container with double glazing was removed prior to an officer's arrival and subsequently reinstated. SRS confirmed that enforcement officers do not announce visits and encouraged the resident to report any further concerns directly to her so they can be escalated promptly.

MOP2 Read out a report from County Councillor in Hagley regarding community concerns and lack of support relating to development pressures. Chair requested that the report be forwarded to the Clerk.

The Chair acknowledged the comments, noting the absence of an adopted Local Plan and the significant pressure placed on local authorities by central government in relation to planning.

MOP3 Expressed concern that planning applications in Highley are being considered in isolation, despite four applications being located within the same small area. Requested that cumulative impact be considered in future.

The Chair explained that applications must be assessed individually, as required by planning law. The Vice-Chair added that there is a large backlog at the Local Planning Authority but also that each application is taken on its own merit.

MOP4 A long-standing resident (aged 94) expressed frustration that government dictates local housing need, stating that local people should determine what is required for their community. Commented that recent new builds in the village are poorly designed and constructed and called for greater devolution of decision-making to the Parish Council.

Power: Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

***Standing orders suspended for item FC26-27.72 : streetlight relocation.**

Standing Orders were suspended to allow Mr Ian Houghton, owner of West beech Homes, to address the Committee. The Chair brought the item forward accordingly.

Mr Houghton outlined the proposal to relocate streetlight SL1 by approximately six metres to facilitate a new site entrance approved under s278/s184 highway works. A new pavement is proposed where none currently exists, and the repositioned column would illuminate both the new footway and the revised access. The developer confirmed that all works would be undertaken at no cost to Highley Parish Council, with permission only required from HPC.

Councillors reviewed the submitted drawing. Cllr Pinches noted that the plan did not clearly distinguish between S1 and S2 and requested clarification on the exact intended new location.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council supports the relocation of SL1 in principle to SL2 position, subject to receipt of a revised drawing clearly identifying the existing and proposed column positions and no liability or cost.

***Standing orders were reinstated**

FC26-27.69 – Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on **Tuesday 1 September 2026**. Power: Local Government Act 1972, Sch.12, para.41(1)

FC26-27.70 – Reports

Power: Local Government Act 1972, s.111

• Policing Report – received and shared

Cllr Bunn raised concerns regarding road safety outside the school, noting instances of children using unlit bicycles and scooters and showing limited awareness of traffic.

Action: Clerk to contact the Safer Neighbourhood Team and Highley Primary School to request confirmation of whether road safety training covering these issues is currently delivered, and to ask that it be included in future provision if not already in place.

• Clerk's Update – supporting documents and announcement that we won Best Kept Village (South) Shropshire for the second year.

• Working Groups / Committees:

- Village Maintenance & Allotments (incl. Bus Shelter) [TP]
- Youth Working Group [LC]
- Communications & Events Working Group [EA]
- Highley Community Drop-In Sept [AP]
- The Severn Centre Advisory Board [TQ]

The Severn Centre Advisory Board [TQ]

Members received an update on ongoing discussions regarding future funding arrangements for the Severn Centre following Halo Leisure's request for continued financial support at a reduced level compared with previous years.

Councillors noted that Halo had not approached alternative funding sources to address the remaining shortfall and raised questions regarding the refurbishment of the MUGA, including reference to potential Sports England funding. It was reported that the forthcoming Halo report confirms that the MUGA will not be funded.

Members discussed the proposal that Highley Parish Council continue contributing at the revised lower level for the next two years, supported by the new external funding source. A question was raised as to whether this contribution would give HPC any stake in ownership; the Chair advised that this would not be the case at

this stage. The Chair further reported that Halo's preferred model is to continue operating the centre, absorb the Severn Centre Trust into Halo Leisure as part of its charitable structure, and maintain the centre's viability. Councillors noted that HPC is entitled to decline funding or offer an alternative amount, although Halo may not necessarily accept such an offer.

Members reflected on the implications should Halo withdraw, including responsibility for management, health and safety, staffing, safeguarding, national insurance, and operational compliance. It was acknowledged that Halo operates numerous leisure centres and has the professional expertise required to run such facilities.

Cllr TQ emphasised that the priority must be to keep the centre open and viable, noting that ownership concerns are largely emotional and that the centre, as a charity, operates close to break-even with publicly available accounts. Members suggested that any future arrangement could include a request for a Parish Council representative (e.g., Chair or Vice-Chair) to sit on the trustee board.

Cllr JM noted that Halo originally stepped in following the robbery and until then the Severn Centre had been operating sustainably until that point. Members queried what would happen when the Health England funding ceases in two years' time.

Cllr SB raised concerns that costs will continue to rise and questioned why Halo has not secured alternative funding sources yet continues to seek ongoing contributions from HPC. The Chair advised that this feedback can be relayed, but Halo's anticipated response is that time is short and the current agreement expires in spring 2027.

Cllr DT advised caution regarding any proposal for the HPC Chair to sit on a trustee board, noting that when he previously served as Chair, he was required to declare an interest at every meeting. Members recalled that the original trustee structure included former Cllr Broome and that historic funding contributions had been made by external partners, including the Police Authority. It was further noted that future changes in local service provision — for example, if the GP surgery were to relocate its health services elsewhere — could affect the partnership landscape and should be considered carefully before altering governance arrangements.

Cllr SRS expressed disappointment that spending on the Severn Centre had been ceased without any communication from Shropshire Council to her in her capacity as County Councillor. T reported that the meeting between HPC and the portfolio holder, Cllr Sarah Marston, had originally been discussed in early August but was postponed several times until Shropshire Council could confirm the new funding source. Cllr SRS stated she would raise this lack of communication with the Leader of Shropshire Council.

RESOLVED: To return to Halo with a willingness to explore future options, noting that members are not averse to the proposed direction but require clarification on:

- why alternative funding sources have not been explored;
- the potential for a Parish Council representative on the trustee board;
- and confirmation that the continued existence of the Severn Centre Trust is non-negotiable.

• Shropshire Councillor Report – requested and shared ahead.

FC26-27.71 – Christmas Light Switch-On & Santa at the Centre

Power: Local Government Act 1972, **s.137**

Council considered the combined event budget for the 2026 Christmas Light Switch-On and Santa at the Centre, funded under s.137 expenditure, including: • Increased allocation – £1,000 • 1,000 footfall stickers – £98 • Grinch costume – £60 • Craft materials – £50–£70 • Children's entertainment – £350 • Raffle ticket printing – approx. £120 • Civic awards & engraving – £100 • Microphone suitable for indoor/outdoor use – £65 • Best decorated house/shop window prizes – £15 Highley Butchers vouchers each • Santa at the Centre budget – £80

Council noted inflationary increases since 2025 and that the Clerk will adjust quantities or remove non-essential items if required to remain within the £1,000 cap.

Council further considered the recommendation of the Working Group that proceeds from the Christmas raffle be donated to SYA – All About Youth, to be held within Cashbook 6 – Youth Club and used towards future match-funding and grant applications.

RESOLVED: To approve the increased budget and associated expenditure for the 2026 Christmas Light Switch-On and Santa at the Centre, and to confirm SYA – All About Youth as the raffle recipient. Council agreed that funds raised will be held by HPC for future Youth Club match-funding and grant application purposes, as recommended by the Working Group.

FC26-27.72 – Street Light Relocation Request (SL1 – Westbeech Developments)

***As above**

FC26-27.73 – Planning Applications

To consider planning applications received, including any submitted after publication. Council to note that the following application/s will be reviewed by the Planning Committee ahead of the Full Council meeting. The Committee's recommendation will be reported to members.

Reference: 26/03191/FUL **Proposal:** Change of use of land for siting of four caravans **Location:** Malt Shovel Inn, Woodhill Road, Highley **Consultation:** Standard consultation **OBJECTION**

Reference: 26/03457/FUL **Proposal:** Erection of one residential unit to form an annexe ancillary to the main dwelling. **Location:** Whitehouse Farm Barn, Netherton Lane, Highley, Bridgnorth, Shropshire. **Applicant:** Mr Sid Davies **OBJECTION**

Power: Town and Country Planning Act 1990

FC26-27.73i – Determined Applications

(For information only – decisions published by Shropshire Council)

Reference: **26/02770/FUL** (validated: 23/07/2026)
Address: Wrens Nest Bungalow, Netherton Road, Highley, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, WV16 6NJ
Proposal: Erection of single storey rear extension
Decision: Grant Permission

Reference: **25/01550/FUL** (validated: 23/04/2025)
Address: Land To The North Of Hazelwells Road, Highley, Shropshire
Proposal: Rural exception site of 24 houses and bungalows
Decision: Grant Permission

Council to note the decision only; no further action required.

FC26-27.74 – Grant Applications

There were no applications.

Power: Local Government Act 1972, s.137

FC26-27.75 – Correspondence

Power: Local Government Act 1972, s.111

- Road Closure: Covert Lane (2–4 Nov, BT)
- Energize Pilot Scheme – Sport England Funding
- Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation
- Letter from Stuart Anderson MP re: Post Office
- Road Closure: Netherton Lane Start/End Date: 10th January 2027 Purpose: Tree cutting

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FC26-27.76 – Finance

Power: Local Government Act 1972, s.150; Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015

• Clerk's salary • HMRC • LGPS • Lebara SIM £5 • CCLA interest • St Mary's Churchyard £487.50 • RJM basket watering & removal • Fundamentals training DR + JS • PKF Littlejohn External Auditor £504.00 • Ink cartridges x3 £57.44 • Art display box frame (YWG) • Comms & Events expenditure including Flippy & Dippy (£350), civic awards, stickers, prizes • Severn Centre Community Hall – Youth Club Autumn Term £820.80 • Severn Centre Sports Hall – Drop-In £147.96 • Booker refreshments for drop in/screening/cardiac training £39.71 •PKF Audit fee £504

Invoices received prior to meeting may also be considered.

Awaiting invoice: Hedge cutting – C. Coomby £600 Office Hire Q3 £297.68 Skillipigs Christmas Cards 75 @£1 each = £75 Poppies – metal cable ties Wreath for war memorial Remembrance Day

RESOLVED to approve these payments.

FC26-27.76 i – Environmental Maintenance Grant – Purchase of Verge Maintenance Equipment

Council considered the proposal to purchase verge-maintenance equipment from the remaining Environmental Maintenance Grant (EMG) budget (£550). Highley Parish Council received £1,000 from Shropshire Council under the EMG scheme and match-funded this with £1,000. Following completion of approved works, £550 remains available. Members noted that EMG conditions require all expenditure to relate solely to environmental maintenance on Shropshire Council-owned land.

The Environmental Working Group proposed purchasing equipment to support ongoing verge maintenance on the B4555 highway verge (SC land) and around the tree project on the Garden Village orchard, comprising:

- Stihl FSA 120 brushcutter
- AP 300 S battery
- AL 301 charger

RESOLVED: To approve the purchase of the verge-maintenance equipment within the remaining EMG allocation.

FC26-27.77 – Notice of Completion of Audit

NOTED completion of the external audit for year ending 31 March 2026 and acknowledge publication requirements and corrections required for the 2026/27 AGAR.

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FC26-27.78 – Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 3 November 2026 at 7.00pm, The Library, Severn Centre.

FC26-27.79 – Exclusion of Press and Public

There were none.

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