

HIGHLEY PARISH COUNCIL

An Ordinary meeting of Highley Parish Council was held on Tuesday 3rd October 2017 at 7pm at the Severn Centre, Highley.

Present: Cllr. D.Tremellen – Chair, Cllrs. R.Honeybourne, A.Honeybourne, J.Marshall, D.Thakrar, G.Court, D.Bayley, P.Atkinson, D.Bache,
Clerk: Mrs.E.Preston
Parishioners: 2

00. Parishioners Time – No Comments

Declaration of Pecuniary interests: Declaration of any disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter to be discussed at the meeting. Members are reminded that they are required to leave the room during the discussion and voting on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, whether or not the interest is entered in the register of member's interest maintained by the monitoring officer.

01. Apologies for absence. Apologies received Cllr.R.Broome, M.Brooks Personal, and Cllr.J.Law – holiday. Cllr. T.Holford, - Illness. Cllr.N.Barker, M.Phipson – work commitments. **RESOLVED** to accept apologies

02. To confirm the minutes of the meeting dated 5th September 2017. It was **RESOLVED** to confirm the minutes as a true and correct record. Chair signed the minutes.

03. Matters arising from minutes:-

Road Safety Schemes

Barrier Repairs Ashleigh Garden –Awaiting further information.

Severn Centre Crossing Point- Shropshire Council - Awaiting start date for the scheme.

Redstone Drive. –This Scheme now to take place in the next financial year

Problem Parking Areas, Woodhill Road, Main Road, High Street, Borle Brook Court, parking bays in the village centre – awaiting a reply from Shropshire Council.

Swimming Pool Update – Nothing to report

CCTV System –Awaiting response from Police and Crime Commissioner regrading grant application

Dog Fouling – Awaiting response from St. Marys PCC on this issue.

Castle Inn – Clerk said she had received concerns regarding the boarding being removed from the windows. This issue had been reported to Shropshire Council and the Police who were looking into the issue.

Skate Park Area surface improvements – no further details

Severn Centre – 10 year Management Agreement – Mrs.V.Hill thanked the Parish Council for consenting to the 10 year Management Services Agreement remaining in force once the Severn Centre Trust becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of Halo Leisure. She stated that the Severn Centre Trust would remain an incorporated charity in its own right and therefore will retain its own Board, managing the Severn Centre strategy with in the context of the wider Halo Strategy. Crucially this Board will have at least one independent director and for continuity in the short term Chris Tibbets will remain on the Board to fulfil this role, whilst, ideally a Highley based replacement can be sought and appointed.

04. Correspondence:

Planter near the Cedars Development – Andy Oliver - Shropshire Council wrote stating that the planter would need to be moved to allow access to the new development. It had been agreed to ask the developers to move the planter to the opposite verge. If the planter collapsed then the developers have been asked to store the plants until the Parish Council were able to relocate them.

Clare Fildes from Shropshire Council thanked the Council for agreeing to a grant to the Severn Valley Country Park conditional on Alveley Parish Council match funding.

VCSA – Welfare Reform – The Big Debate – Wednesday 4th October 2017 –Cllr. G.Court to attend.

Shropshire Council – 5 year housing supply statement 2017

SALC September Bulletin – AGM 28th November 2017.

SALC – Shropshire Council – Local Plan Review.

Cooperative Car Park – Cllr.Thakrar said he had received concerns about the condition of the Car Park. He stated that these concerned the Gulley and the metal box in the disabled bay which reduced the size of the disabled parking bay. It was stated that the Gulley could not be filled in due to the damp course in the adjoining buildings. The metal box was for the newspaper returns.

05. To look at any planning applications received.

17/04692/AGR – Hazelwells Farm, Highley. Agricultural building for forage and machinery storage – **NO OBJECTIONS.**

17/04736/TCA- To top 1 Conifer tree within Highley Conservation Area – Springfield, Church Lane, Highley – **NO OBJECTIONS.**

06. Scout/Brownie Hut – Grant Application – from last meeting - Awaiting further details from the Scout/Brownie Hut Committee.

07. Rules for Grant Application – from last meeting. - Revenue and Resources Committee recommend the Grant Application Form and Guidance Notes to the Parish Council. Following an agreed change adding that grant requests over £9,999 would need three quotations it was **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendations.

08. Village Maintenance Working Party – Report from Meeting.

The Village Maintenance Working Party met to discuss the unsatisfactory state of the village as expressed by villagers and to seek ways and means to improve that situation. All present were unanimous in regretting the dissolution of Summer Pride and a portfolio of historical articles and photographs was circulated to remind those present of what had been lost. There was general expression of appreciation of Chris Reeves and the Severn Centre stepping in with limited personnel resources to partially plug the gap created by Summer Pride's dissolution to ensure the village retained its floral displays. Discussion followed that accepted the inevitability of Summer Pride's dissolution, given the strain that the work involved placed on members who were admittedly "getting on a bit", a situation that was not, at the time, seen likely to be resolved with no immediate prospect that natural wastage would be balanced-out by recruitment of new volunteers. It was also agreed that a series of "misunderstandings" of the operational ethos of Summer Pride led to a failure to appreciate fully the cost: benefit of its public funding, against what the village gained in return, had accelerated its dissolution. Accepting all that as "historical", the group explored ways in which the current situation could be ameliorated in the short term, the ultimate ambition being a return to Summer Pride's "glory days" in whatever form was practicable. To that end, it was agreed that the Parish Council consider placing village maintenance on a formal footing and look at ways in which work could be contracted-out, having first decided what was desirable from the point of view of parishioners, then looking at what was possible within the constraints of whatever budget was available, both in terms of the Maintenance Grant from Shropshire Council and from a small increase in the precept. It was agreed that members of the Working Group approach a number of the individuals mentioned in their discussion (not named here for reasons of commercial and personal discretion) to see what interest, if any, there was to take on this work. When there was an idea of what, if any, interest had been expressed and what, if any, ideas came back from those approached, the Working Group could then formulate a more formal understanding of the nature of any contract required – for instance, whether 3rd Party insurance was required of whoever contracted for the work or whether the contractor would be covered by the PC's own insurance taken out specifically for that purpose. Parish Clerk would be asked to clarify that situation. It was also agreed that it is always easier to get new members to join an established group than to get a new initiative started from scratch, which was another reason to regret the dissolution of Summer Pride. That said, June Guest did suggest that it might (emphasis on "might") be possible to at least partially resurrect Summer Pride "this time next year", once prospective volunteers who had recently identified themselves to her were established in a role involving the tidying-up of roadside planted areas, the idea being to add new members to what, by then, was hoped would be a growing group. Meanwhile, Chris Reeves would continue with the ordering of the plants for 2018 from the current supplier and Cllr. George Court agreed to see to the distribution of the baskets and tubs next season, a role he had undertaken in 2017, for which he was formally thanked. Chris Reeves mentioned that the water bowser needed attention and it was agreed that this would be costed and subsequently put to the PC for funding. The

watering contract would continue as at present. A short discussion followed concerning the preparations for this year's Christmas tree and Severn Centre Christmas lighting display. Chris Reeves assured the group that it was all in hand as per previous years. Uncertainty over the preparedness of Halo to continue the preparation and maintenance work involved in the village floral displays was acknowledged. It was proposed that it be put to the PC and its Finance & Resources Committee that the PC look into fully adopting, via contracting-out (see para 8 above), all aspects of what was considered to be the essential work of promoting Highley as not just a good place to live but a good place to establish a business.

Christmas Lights.

The Chair, called Cllr.Holford put the call on 'conference' so that he could hear the discussions respond. Cllr. Holford confirmed that Mr. C.Holford is still OK to erect the lights and recommended that we continue to use the current Wolverhampton Company to certify them to meet the regulatory requirements. He further agreed to ask Mr. Holford to get the lights out and check them so that we can get any repairs, if needed, done in time. The Group felt that it was necessary to seriously consider hiring a cherry picker to facilitate the fitting work because, as the contracting authority, the Parish Council is formally responsible for insuring all risks by ensuring that all aspects of the fitting work is carried out according to all relevant parts of the H&S Act, specifically: 'The Work at Height Regulations 2005'. The Finance & Resources Committee to be asked to review that in order to establish the wider financial ramifications if funded via the precept, balancing the cost against the wider benefits. Clerk to add these items to the Agenda for the next Parish Council meeting for approval to allow the sorting of all the necessary paperwork for Shropshire Council, Western Power, and Insurance. Meeting ended at 11.50 and it was agreed to call the next meeting at a time and date to be agreed, but in time to include all the considerations related above in the setting of the precept.

09. Finance and Resources Committee – Report from Meeting – It was **RESOLVED** that the Revenue and Resources Committee look at the results from the Village Survey and put together a list of projects at the next meeting of the Revenue and Resources Committee. This list to take into account the eligibility criteria for use of the CIL funds available. This to then be taken to the next Full Parish Council meeting for consideration.

STANDING ORDERS MOVED to Allow Mr.L.Aspin and Mrs.C.Giffiths to give a presentation on the grant request for the Junior Football Club.

10. Highley Rugby Club/Junior Football Club – grant request – RESOLVED that the Parish Council give a grant of £3,895 towards the Flood Lights at the grounds in Netherton Lane for the Highley Junior Football Club.

11. Footpath Vicarage Lane – Cllr. R.Honeybourne - Cllr. Honeybourne received a concern regarding the condition of the footpath in particular the BT box which is standing proud, the land between the line of trees next to the new development, the condition of the Steps and Handrail. Clerk said this issue had been reported to Shropshire Council who stated they would repair the handrails. Cllr.Tremellen said the BT Box was standing proud due to the footpath needing repairs. Clerk to write to Shona Butter again and Cllr.Tremellen in his capacity as Shropshire Councillor, to look at this issue.

12. Kissing Gates Redstone Drive/Netherton Lane. - Cllr. Tremellen said the missing Kissing Gate had been returned but that it needed some new hardware to fix it. Clerk to inform Shona Butter from Shropshire Council about this and ask her to arrange for the gate to be put back in place.

13. Shropshire Councillors Report.

7 September, Audit Committee. SC's external auditors Grant Thornton delivered their verdict on the Council's finances. Quite how James Walton, SC's Finance Officer, keeps on top of things always amazes me.

11 September, attended Highley Community School in my role as County Councillor and school Link Governor in the 'Humanities Session' to be 'interviewed' by Years 5 & 6 on my personal beliefs and how they influenced my actions as a local councillor. .

12 September, attended a series of seminars and workshop sessions on 'Implementing the Shropshire Leisure Facility Strategy 2018/23' as part of the Actively Improving Lives Forum, held at Shrewsbury Guildhall.

13 September, attended a SALC training session: 'Negotiate a Better Outcome in Planning' training at The Lord Hill Hotel in Shrewsbury. An interesting overview that encouraged greater community engagement in the process of negotiating mutually advantageous outcomes from the planning processes that precede new development. Engagement with the process is the key.

14 September, the Highley Action Group met. A lot of the focus has gone out of the Group's meetings. In a subsequent discussion with another member of the Group it was agreed that we needed to try and get back to what the Group was originally constituted for – a point independently acknowledged by Highley's CEO in a subsequent email to the Group. Not quite sure how that can happen, given that many of the problems it was set up to address are no longer such a problem and "routine" issues can be dealt with through the conventional channels via email.

15 September, Village Maintenance Working Group met to discuss "the state of the village". I'd asked Chris Reeves (Severn Centre) and June Guest (ex-Summer Pride) to attend to see if differences could be addressed and a mutually beneficial outcome achieved – they were and it was. Practical details have still to be worked out, but a transitional understanding was reached that would at least prepare the way for a workable future partnership. The results are already to be seen in some of the roadside flower beds. (*See separate report.*)

18 September: A full day, started with an early-morning briefing at Shirehall by SC Highways on Road Works Notices, which I had to leave early because I was one of the three members of the General Appeals Panel called to hear an appeal against a refusal to grant Council Tax Relief. That was followed by the regular Backbenchers Briefing Meeting that is always called on the Monday before Full Council... then straight back for the Full Governing Board meeting at Highley Community School.

19 September, presentation of the prestigious Queen's Award to SVCP volunteers by the Lord Lieutenant of the County at Alveley Activity Centre. That was nice. Well deserved, too, because they do work hard to maintain what we have in the face of a fast-diminishing budget. It always saddens me that more volunteers aren't forthcoming from Highley. Just Jan Davey, June Guest, and myself from this side of the river.

20 September, Bridgnorth Area Member's Liaison meeting with Chris Edwards at Canern Brook when I raised the Bridgnorth by-pass road works, particularly the day the school bus took two hours to get from here to town! I have been promised a "washing up session" by the County's Highways boss, Steve Brown, so hopefully we shouldn't see quite such bad situations occur again, although I'm not holding my breath given that I was given similar assurances following the Knowle Sands work!. That evening the SALC Area Committee meeting was held here at the Severn Centre, which incorporated a presentation by SC's Corporate Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Claire Porter, and SC's Section 105 officer, Graham White, on the relevance and importance of compliance with the Code of Conduct. A pity more of our parish councillors couldn't make it because the subject is important and should be high on the agenda of everyone who recognises not just the civic-duty element but the legal duty imposed by the role they have voluntarily taken on.

21 September Full Council and then, on the rising of The Council, a meeting of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee which reviewed the progress of the Task & Finish Group established to look at CIL, s106, and Affordable Housing Contributions. Nothing was resolved because the sub-groups tasked to investigate different elements of each developer contribution needed more time to refine findings for the final report.

26 September, induction training at Worcestershire CC HQ, Worcester, relating to the role of the Police & Crime Panel in its scrutiny of the work programme of the Police and Crime Commissioner, followed by a full meeting of the PCP where the PCC's proposed merger of the Police and Fire Authorities was considered. The proposal was rejected by the Panel to the obvious displeasure of the PCC.

27 September, meeting of HPC Revenue & Resources Committee. (*See separate report.*)

28 September, SALC training - 'Neighbourhood & Other Plans' at Shirehall, a presentation by Nicola Fisher on the application of developer contributions to community projects as identified in the review of Local Plans

29 September, Town & Parish Council Forum, Shirehall. Steve Brown (Highways) and Steve Davenport (Portfolio Holder for Highways) announced the new highways contractor would be Keir.

Nic Fisher then delivered a shorter version of her presentation of the evening before. Given the importance of the subject I asked Nic to come down and give the presentation to the next HPC meeting on 7 November. It is essential that as many Parish Councillors as possible attend that session because it is crucial to our future planning within the constraints imposed by any future funding cuts.

Summary...

Council budgets are now so tight that there is little or no room to cope with existing, let alone extra pressures given that the calculated shortfall in Local Authority funding is projected to be £5.8bn by 2019/20, PLUS £1.3bn just to stabilise the care sector... £7.1bn in total! Like all other LAs, SC has had to cut services or, as is happening now, pass them on to us. Reserves are being eaten into and talk is of selling off assets, increasing Council Tax and charges for internal services like planning and taking on commercial projects (see 'Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire 2017 - 2021'). Shropshire Council is having to fund the increase in the national living wage and still has the uncertainty of a further lifting of the pay cap on public sector pay beyond the police and prison service. All of that is unknown and that uncertainty affects Shropshire Council's financial

planning. The watchword now is plan for the worst case and hope it doesn't turn out to be as bad as your worst predictions indicated it could have been. That's not a nice place to be. We need investment in sports and leisure facilities to keep our communities active and healthy, which is an area we can be effectively involved in. But it needs to be paid for and the choices WE are faced with HAVE to be communicated to the people we represent. Shropshire Council wants to invest in affordable housing and that's an area the parish council can be involved in, but – and this came across loud and clear in the training sessions some of us attended over the past few weeks - only if we EFFECTIVELY engage enough to be considered as legitimate consultees and not just as innocent bystanders with an opinion that can be discounted if it doesn't align with SC's Core Strategies. Sorry for being blunt, but being a Parish Councillor has suddenly got real because the decisions we have to start making we will be held to account for because they are going to be costing people money.

RESOLVED that Nicola Fisher be invited to attend the Parish Council meeting on the 7th November. Meeting to start at 6.00pm to allow this to presentation to take place.

09. Finance:

Viking Payments	Stationery	£127.10
EON Energy	Street Light – Old School Close	£159.54
Eon Energy	Street Light Repairs.	£112.46
SALC	Be a Better Councillor Training – G.Court	£74.40
SALC	Chairmanship Training – D.Tremellen	£25.00
J.Pietraggallo	Plant Watering	£500.00
Post Office Ltd	Tax and National Insurance	£68.86
M.E.Preston	Salary	£910.47
Highley Juniors Football Club	Grant towards Flood Lighting	£3,895.00

RESOLVED to accept cheques.

Meeting closed 8.45pm

Signed

Date: