

MINUTES OF THE SHERIFFHALES ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THE 13th JULY 2021 AT SHERIFFHALES VILLAGE HALL

Present: Councillors: Dr Alan MacWhannell (Chairman); Mr Gordon Tonkinson; Mr Nicholas Edwards; Mr Kevin Turley; Mr John Horne.

In attendance Clerk to the Council – Miss Jennifer Cree, Mr and Mrs Himsworth, Peter Bonsall, Izzy Bonsall, Peter Firth, Anthony Robinson

Apologies: Councillor Mr Neil Pulker; Miss Megan Gardner

1. Chairman's welcome and announcements

Councillor Alan MacWhannell welcomed everyone present and informed the public present that this is their meeting to ask any questions and raise any issues they would like to.

2. Community presentations

Montessori school

I would like to thank the Parish Council for giving me the opportunity to report on last year at our Preschool.

Whilst the world has changed around us over the past 2 years, the challenge for us at Preschool has been to maintain the stability and consistency for our children and families during this time. In February 2020 we achieved an outstanding judgement. Although this benchmark reinforces our day to day practice as being the very best, our priority is that our families place their trust in us to provide the best education and care for their children. The external influence of the global pandemic challenged us even further to deliver this, but with the incredible support of our parents and the guidance from Shropshire Council we have continued to open the door each morning to a full cohort of children. With the understanding the Village Hall Committee we were able to adapt elements of our operation and introduced additional health and safety measures to enable us to operate almost normal. Providing a constant for young children is essential to enable them to achieve their potential, learning from their experiences during the journey they take with us until they are ready to move on to school. Being able to continue to use the Village Hall and remain open has been reassuring for our families and alleviated the stress so many have been facing over the last 16 months. It is unquestionably appreciated by all our families.

Adapting methods of communication to our families, future families and the wider community to ensure we reach everyone has been straight forward. During lockdown, we delivered activities to doorsteps and updated our website. We are grateful to the Parish Magazine for enabling us to continue to place an update and information of our activities each month. Community members, Sheriffhales Primary School and St Mary's Church have also been an invaluable support.

Understanding the place our Pre-school has in community is vital for Pre-School to survive. Operating within the constraints of using a village hall that is used by others

and undergoing building work, particularly during a time when the health and safety of the public is paramount has been a challenge. We thank the Village Hall Committee for allowing us to take advantage of the wonderful building and provide a place of excitement, energy and discovery for our young children. We hope we can continue to work with them to maintain the stability of our Pre-school and in what we do to provide an outstanding setting, so that many more young children will continue to have the opportunity to experience what we offer.

Jenny Collins

Sheriffhales WI

Sheriffhales WI have had a very interesting year indeed. We started out in January 2021 with a new President, Karen Fradgley and 30 members. We then had one meeting before lockdown started. We as a committee stayed in contact with our members via telephone calls and Presidents monthly email. We as a committee then at Easter, Christmas and Valentines distributed gift bags to all the member. Sadly we lost 2 of our members during this time and our numbers have also dropped to 17 members only. We hope to start our meetings again on Thursday 22nd July with a coffee, cake and catchup so any ladies interested please come and join us.

Village Hall report from Lawrence Gardner

The Village Hall has had a challenging year. We have not hired beyond essential service users throughout the Covid crisis and we wait to see what interest in hiring the hall re-emerges as restrictions hopefully ease.

The two service users have been the local Primary School and Montessori Pre-School. Both of these have an agreement based on a heavily discounted charge rate. The majority of our running costs are unavoidable, notably Fire compliance, Insurance, utility and heating bills. Our costs were in excess of our income in the year resulting in a trading deficit, initially met from reserves.

Our oil fired boiler decided to give up the ghost and although we are currently managing to keep it limping along for domestic hot water needs, it is unlikely to get us through another winter, its replacement cost is estimated around £3,000.

We have benefitted from favourable response to our applications to the Local Authority for Covid financial support which has been a great help.

We have continued with the extension project works, started in 2019, though on a somewhat piecemeal basis. This is proving challenging as materials costs have risen in consequence of global market pressures within the construction industry. We are keen to expedite, the most pressing need being to achieve a sealed building in order to meet risk management obligations expected by our insurers and in the interests of the overall security of the building.

We received a £5,000 contribution in support of our extension project from the Parish Council in 2019 and if it were within their gift to consider additional financial support to assist the completion of our project then I am sure that this would be very much appreciated."

Sheriffhales Parish Magazine – Report for Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday 13th
July 2021

1. Background

- a) The Parish Magazine has been provided since 1983, is compiled by volunteers and printed at Sheriffhales Primary School.
- b) 88 copies are currently printed for those residents without technology, and distributed by a team of volunteer deliverers.
- c) 150 copies are currently emailed.
- d) A survey in 2019 revealed that the magazine is a valuable asset to the community, providing a monthly vehicle for timely local information, advertising events, businesses and stories from around the area.

2. Budget and Charges – these have been set at a ‘not for profit’ level to cover the annual costs.

- a) There is a charge of £5 per annum for the printed version and £3 for the email.
- b) There is a charge to Advertisers of £20 per year. It should be noted that many businesses advertise merely to support the production of the magazine.
- c) The printing cost is approximately £650, with the administration costs covered by a contribution of £220 from the Parish Council.
- d) This is the only cost other than a small sundries budget, as all other services are provided by the volunteers.

3. Current situation

- a) The content of the magazine relies heavily on contributions from the community and local business support from advertising. Without this content the magazine would not exist, and thanks must go to the regular contributors.
- b) The magazine has been provided free this year to date, initially due to the pandemic, but thanks to a donation from SaCREC in 2020, it will continue to be free for the remainder of the year.
- c) The benefit of providing a free magazine has meant the collection of subscriptions has been dispensed with, which relies on readers either using online banking (which many don’t use), delivering monies to a collection point, or deliverers collecting it on their rounds, and then visits to the bank to deposit the funds.
- d) In the light of this, funding is being sought in order to continue providing the magazine free of charge.
- e) The magazine currently has a vacancy for an assistant editor.

Rural crime

Over the last year there has been a few incidents where properties and outbuildings have been attempted/broken into.

There has been an increase in residential and business burglaries within the towns of Shifnal and Albrighton and we believe that this has seen potential criminals target Sheriffhales also.

The majority of thefts in Sheriffhales have been from outbuildings but this doesn't mean that house burglaries would not happen.

Good quality CCTV has helped get images of persons and registrations of vehicles involved in these crimes. Vehicle registrations can help us put a name and address to a vehicle.

WhatsApp groups have been set up amongst residents to let each other know about suspicious activity/vehicles within the area. These have proven to be very effective in helping disrupt potential offences.

There are various measures you are able to put in place in regards to protecting your own property. Good quality CCTV, this helps in identifying suspects and most new CCTV systems are linked to your mobile device so you can live view should you want or need to.

Consider installing a burglar alarm and outside security lighting. These deters burglars.

Lock all doors and close all windows before leaving the house.

Lock front and back doors, even when you are in the house and particularly overnight.

Don't leave valuable items on view. Don't leave car keys near to a letter box where a burglar can where a burglar can reach through and steal them.

Lock garden gates and side entrances. Don't leave anything lying about that a burglar could use to break-in to your home.

Don't leave wheelie bins where they could be used by someone to climb over a wall or fence.

Outbuilding security

Don't give them the opportunity or the tools to commit a crime. Lock everything away securely. Tools can be locked inside a locker or box or secured with a chain.

Secure your bike to the ground or a lockable stand within a locked shed or garage. Visit sold secure to search for ground anchors and other locks designed to fix to floors and walls.

It's always worth draping an old sheet or blanket over the top of mowers or bikes to keep them covered from view.

Although it might sound like stating the obvious, never leave your garage or shed door unlocked if you're not around.

Property marking your items is advisable and some tools can be painted with your name or postcode. Forensic marking is also an option.

Sheriffhales Support Group

The support group has been going since March 15th 2020. The platform of WhatsApp was chosen as quite a lot of Parishioners are not on social media, but most do have smart phones.

The group hand delivered leaflets throughout the Parish so by official lockdown, everyone knew who they could call for help, groceries, prescriptions and a general moral boost call, which many needed.

To date, the helpline numbers have taken over 300 calls and the group as a whole has helped over 150 people on various errands. The group has also become a great community chat group and participants on the WhatsApp are up to 89. We still have calls for assistance and we are still helping those who need it. As a community, it has been wonderful to see the interaction and information that is shared on this group. Without everyone's support and willingness to get involved, this would not be still ongoing. Together, as a community we have managed to support each other through these weird times. The Community Afternoon Gathering on 11th September will be a fitting opportunity for everyone to get together, possibly to actually meet face to face for the first time! I look forward to seeing everyone there.

Groceries	49
Prescriptions	68
Vets	6
Chat calls	21
Buddies	6

The buddies were when we identified a household that would need a considerable amount of support and help and we found a suitable volunteer to 'buddy ' with that household, so they had a direct contact, with a bit more privacy. 2 of the buddies are still ongoing.

Sheriffhales Community Benches to Commemorate 2020.

During lockdown, the Support Group enabled me to keep communications open with most areas of the Parish. Over time and after quite a lot of consultation, we, as a community thought it to be a good idea to have some benches installed around the Parish. This initially came about when a lot of Parishioners were walking every day during lockdown, some of which were seen to be struggling with the heat at the time. The benches also became an answer to a facility that appeared to be needed. We approached Sacrec for funding for the benches back in May 2020, however, for various reasons, the committee did not officially discuss and agree the funding of the benches until May 2021. At that point, permission was sort officially to Shropshire County Council via the Parish Council. The benches are being supplied by a local Green Oak carpenter and hopefully will be installed the end of August.

Chairman's report

3. To confirm the Minutes of the Sherifhales APM held on Thursday 19th May 2019.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2019, having been circulated in advance of the current meeting, were approved and signed as a true record of the proceedings at that meeting.

4. Matters Arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

5. Parish Council Report

Chairman's report is detailed below:-

My last report presented in May 2019, started with a comment that the issues were again similar to the previous years, then in the second paragraph of my report I stated that money for services within our locality had reduced surprise. This remains true now and the financial circumstances in which local government has to operate at the moment in 2021, are very difficult and unlikely to improve.

It's against this context that I am pleased to report some wins. in paragraph 5.2 I of my previous report I moaned the fact that the road surface in the evergreens had continued to deteriorate but had been classified as a low priority due to the type of traffic using the road, we've now had the road surface replaced completely.

Last meeting we used our experience over this problem (and not solving it) as an example of difficulty of communication with Shropshire Council and although this was certainly a win for us communication with the unitary authority continues to be difficult and indeed in many cases even more frustrating than it was before I'm sure there's many reasons for this.

Shropshire Council itself has undergone some considerable change over the last 18 months. We shall very much look forward to improvement in communication and availability to key officers improving.

Highways issues remain problematic for our community. I mentioned last time in 5.3 safety assessments had been undertaken following the road improvements outside the pinfold and since then a further assessment of the way the changes in the centre of the village have impacted our community and traffic flows has been undertaken with the report made available to us recently.

Irrespective of how satisfactory the improvements may have been, the yearly

monitoring set up in the centre of the village after it being declared a “black spot” area has been stopped by the police. My experience is that traffic flows and the type of traffic using the road has increased and Shropshire Council have to be fair already set in place further monitoring to evaluate this. we suspect a survey twice in 12 months will not capture sufficient data to confirm our strong impression that for lots of reasons we need to monitor traffic more closely and will be looking at this again.

One big change of course this year is the traffic lighting of the A5 junction. Improvements at this junction had been discussed for decades and to have achieved this improvement is a significant win for all of us. There has now been a safety evaluation at these crossroads and an initial report produced. At the moment no further changes are being considered.

Traffic issues at the Woodcote junction remain a concern to us but, again, after a lot of pressure from the Parish Council and our local Unitary Councillor we have agreement and some timescale to improvement in this area.

The Quarry at Woodcote has now been operating for some time and we continue to monitor compliance with their Planning permission.

I mentioned last time that the amenity area at Heath Hill had been left to deteriorate and we received EMG funding to improve this. The trees planted by the Parish Council at this site many years ago many people will know, have been vandalised with deliberate criminal damage to them by unknown persons. we are currently discussing how best to move on this and how to manage the area appropriately so that the amenity is how we would want it and any visual disturbance to for example agricultural vehicles is minimised.

Across Shropshire as a whole and certainly in Sheriffhales parish Fly tipping has become a major problem both to Shropshire Council and to local farmers. At the last meeting fly tipping was only discussed in passing when we were commenting on the closure of back road at crackly bank due to collapse of a culvert. I’m pleased to report that after initially thinking the road should remain closed a decision has been made to reopen the road and repair the culvert in the next few weeks. we have also been requesting removal of some of the laybys on the Lilleshall Road that are regular sites of tipping. We feel strongly that fly tipping should be given a higher priority within our locality both with increased enforcement and sustainable engineering solutions where appropriate.

We mentioned last time that rural communities are facing new challenges both in resilience to climate change (especially noting the increase in flooding issues within the Parish), off grid heating and utilities and in the way in which the environment is used for housing and for modern ways of farming.

One of my expectations recorded at the last meeting was that we would have a neighbourhood plan developed that would to some extent provide a map for these sorts of developments. I also have discussed whether the council should go for a

General Power of Competence which allows more flexibility on how we spend our money. Both of these objectives of mine have not been fulfilled with the council as a whole feeling that a neighbourhood plan would either be difficult for us to achieve given the resources the council had in the parish or unlikely to be agreed to by the unitary authority. Since the last meeting have been a number of developments that suggest to me that we should try again to develop a clear Sheriffhales parish context for planning.

The Experience of Neighbouring Tong council and Shifnal Town Council is salutary here. Nevertheless, without a clear plan of the direction in which we wish development to go we end up being reactive to events i.e. responding late in a planning process.

I mentioned last time that our relationship with the planning department was sometimes difficult and it's difficult to get a response to emails. I think there has been some improvement here however there is still room for improvement.

On other wins I should add that the improvements to the Playing field area new seating and " Orchard Area " have been widely appreciated. Thanks to all who have contributed to this phase of the re fresh of this space.

Finally I would like to say a big thank you to all the groups in the community many of whom have submitted reports to this meeting for their contribution and hard work. It is hard and it is appreciated.

6. Civic Service

Everyone is welcome to attend the Celebrating Sheriffhales Day on the 19th September time to be confirmed.

7. Questions arising from the public relevant to the reports or with regards to the parish.

Members of the public raised the following issues / comments:-

Mr Peter Bonsall – clarified a point on funding on the report from the Village Hall stating that £40,000 had been allocated to the village hall works, they had received £18000, and there was a balance of £22000 to still be paid to them; With regard to the report on Community benches he corrected a minor point that the funding had been delayed due to the forms not being submitted correctly.

Mr Bonsall reported on the status of the proposed village shop, the group have applied for a grant from the parish Council which is still outstanding a decision. As part of the planning application they have now been told they need to undertake a traffic survey with an estimated cost of £5000, the grant requested could be used for its original purpose or to fund this extra cost incurred. Shropshire Councillor Mr Kevin Turley said he would speak to Highways and try to organise a site visit to help resolve this issue.

Mr Gordon Tonkinson, agreed with the Parish going for a General Power of Competence, and the Chairman clarified that the Parish council still go for this as they have 2/3 elected members. He queried the cost to the works at Crackley Bank, but stated as long as it is what the residents of the area want then he was satisfied.

Mr Himsworth asked if the newly installed traffic lights on the A5 / B4379 could be reviewed as the electronic sequence is causing issues with traffic crossing the road from the B4379. In addition the Parish has requested better markings on the road, to help drivers understand the priorities. This will be passed to the relevant Highways Authority.

8. Close

The Chairman thanked the members of the Parish Council and the public for attending the meeting, meeting closed at 7.45 pm.