

**MINUTES OF  
ALL STRETTON, SMETHCOTT AND WOOLSTASTON PARISH COUNCIL  
MEETING  
held at Picklescott Village  
Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Present**

C'Ilr Dale (Chairman); C'Ilr Ecob; C'Ilr Hibbot-Morris; C'Ilr Morris  
Shropshire C'Ilr Dan Morris  
13 members of the public attended the meeting  
Clerk : Mrs J Griffiths

**Apologies**

C'Ilr Burton who is away on holiday

**1. Chairman's Introduction**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded them to express an interest in anything on the Agenda where they consider they have an interest.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

The Chairman reminded everyone to declare any interest in any items where they thought they have an interest. No declarations of interest were received.

**3. Public Comments**

The members of the public attending the meeting had come to comment on highway issues. They were asked not to comment at this stage and to wait until Highways were discussed under item 8 when Standing Order would be lifted to allow them to speak.

One member of the public expressed concern that 20% of farmland would be given over to plant trees as the target was to plant 2m trees. As this is National Policy the Parish Council were unable to comment.

**4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

It was proposed by C'Ilr Morris, seconded by C'Ilr Phillips and unanimously agreed that the Minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> January provided a true and accurate record of the meeting. The Chairman then signed a copy of the Minutes .

**5. Matters Arising (not included on the Agenda)**

There were no matters arising not covered on the agenda.

**6. Correspondence**

The Clerk circulates all correspondence as it is received. The Clerk also reported the following correspondence:-

- Clerk and Councils Direct Magazine – March – handed to the Chairman
- Enquiry from a resident interested in becoming a Parish Councillor. The Clerk had replied to say there were no vacancies at this time. If a vacancy arose before the next election in May 2025 it would be advertised.
- Shropshire Area Committee Meeting will be held in the Council Offices in Shrewsbury at 6.30pm on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April. This was forwarded

to the Chairman on 8<sup>th</sup> March. The Chairman told the meeting that he would try to attend.

## **7. Planning**

### **(a) Clerk to report decisions on applications previously discussed:**

#### **23/01896/FUL Redcote, Lower Wood**

An application for a single plot exception site affordable dwelling south of Redcote, Lower Wood had been received on 12<sup>th</sup> May. The Clerk had contacted Shropshire Council to say that the Parish Council had not been approached to confirm the local connection. The Clerk had received a letter of apology from the Housing Enabling Officer to say she had omitted to ask the Parish Council for their confirmation and now asked them to establish the local connection.

This application was discussed at the May meeting. The Clerk told the meeting that to be eligible for this scheme applicants have to demonstrate a "Strong Local Connection" to the parish area within which the plot of land lies. It was agreed that the applicant met the following two criteria:-

- They are lawfully resident in the local area and have lived there for at least the previous five years
- They are currently employed or routinely carry out self-employment work within either the local area or 5km of the site

The Clerk prepared a letter to the Housing Enabling Officer confirming that the applicant meets the above criteria.

The application was discussed at the May meeting and it was proposed by C'lr Philips, seconded by C'lr Hibbot-Morris and unanimously agreed that the Parish Council would not comment on this application. .

The Clerk told the July meeting that she had written to the Housing Enabling Officer on 22<sup>nd</sup> May confirming the local connection and had received an acknowledgement.

The Clerk told the March meeting that this application was approved on 29<sup>th</sup> January.

#### **23/05148/FUL Proposed Agricultural Workers Dwelling**

Proposed agricultural workers dwelling SW of Walkmills . Erection of agricultural needs dwelling. This application was discussed at the January meeting when C'lr Dale had declared an interest as shown in Item 2, as the applicant is known to him and he carries out work for the applicant. He left the room when this application was discussed. This application was received and forwarded to all Councillors on 22<sup>nd</sup> December. The Clerk had asked Councillors to contact her if they wish to arrange a site visit. A site visit had not been requested. The Clerk had downloaded the plans and circulated these at the meeting. This application was discussed at the meeting and it was proposed by C'lr Ecob, seconded by C'lr Hibbot-Morris that there was no objections and the Parish Council would support this application. A vote was taken with 1 Councillor. Therefore the proposal was carried by a majority vote. The clerk told the March meeting that this application is shown as "awaiting a decision".

At the January meeting one of the members of the public expressed concern that farmland had recently been sold in Picklescote and it was understood that this would now be given over to forestry. The Clerk was asked to contact Shropshire Council Planning to ask for confirmation on planning policies regarding the change of use of agricultural land.

The Clerk had received a reply from the Senior Planning Officer on 30<sup>th</sup> January outlining the Definitive of agriculture and concluded with the following paragraph:-

“The use of land for recreational purposes may require planning permission if it is considered to represent a material change of use, however if it is deemed to be de minimus then planning permission would not be required”

The full reply had been forwarded to all Councillors on 30<sup>th</sup> January.

**(b) Clerk to report on application received between meetings**

**24/00202/FUL Smithy Cottage, Lower Wood**

Erection of new garage and change of use of land into additional garden space with access track from existing access. This application was received and forwarded to all Councillors on 26<sup>th</sup> January. The Parish Council did not comment on this application. The Clerk told the March Meeting that this application had been approved on 27<sup>th</sup> February.

**(c) Applications discussed at the meeting**

**24/00871/VAR Hall Farm, Picklescott**

Variation of Condition no 2 attached to Listed Building Consent Ref. 16/05367/LBC dated 11.4.2018. This was received and forwarded to all Councillors on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024. As this is a variation on a previously approved Listed Building consent the Parish Council did not wish to comment.

**24/00998/AGR Greenfields, Pulverbatch**

Erection of a general purpose agricultural building. This agricultural application was sent for information only. It was received and forwarded to all Councillors on 13<sup>th</sup> March.

**24/01000/HHE Greenfields, Pulverbatch**

Erection of a single storey rear extension to a detached dwelling. This application was received and forwarded to all Councillors on 12<sup>th</sup> March. This was sent for information only and the Parish Council cannot comment.

**24/01091/FUL Tiryfon, All Stretton**

Erection of a single storey side extension. This application was received and forwarded to all Councillors on 21<sup>st</sup> March. This application was discussed and it was proposed by C'Ilr Starnes, seconded by C'Ilr Phillips and unanimously agreed that the Parish Council would not comment on this application.

**24/01119/FUL Shropshire County Brides Limited, Leebotwood**

Erection of extension and alterations. This application was received on 25<sup>th</sup> March and forwarded to all Councillors. This was discussed at the meeting when it was proposed by C'Ilr Starnes, seconded by C'Ilr Phillips and unanimously agreed that the Parish Council would not comment on this application.

## **8. Highways**

**(a) Clerk to report on highway matters previously reported**

Shropshire Council confirmed by e mail some time ago that that Keir would be instructed to erect the Not Suitable for HGV sign to be erected at the Picklescott end of Church Lane. This has still not be carried out at the time of the September meeting. Shropshire C'Ilr D. Morris had previously chased this work and would continue to do so. The Clerk had e mail Shropshire Council following the September meeting and had chased this again after the

November meeting. This was discussed at the January Meeting and the Clerk and C'llr D Morris agreed to chase again.

The damaged railings on Church Road were repaired in February..

A member of the public contacted Shropshire Council on 12<sup>th</sup> November and forwarded photographs of large pot holes on the road leading from Dorrington to Picklescott. Shropshire C'llr Dan Morris had contacted Shropshire Council on 4<sup>th</sup> January after receiving further complaints about this road being unsafe due to deep potholes. He has urged Shropshire Council to look at this road as a whole and not just patching potholes. Shropshire Councillor D Morris had also asked for this entire road to be included in a future capital programme. The Clerk was also asked to write to Shropshire Council making the same request. Shropshire Councillor D Morris told the March meeting that he had now carried out a site visit with officials from Shropshire Council Highways and it has been agreed that resources would be made available to scrap the road surface, clean roadside ditches and grips and fill the carriageway potholes. This work will be done as an emergency. Access will be limited through the work area due to lack of width to allow passing traffic. Shropshire Council appreciate that this may cause a few issues locally but they have no alternative in the timescale available if they want to achieve some short term solution.

It was proposed by C'llr Phillips, seconded by C'llr Dale and unanimously agreed to lift Standing Orders to allow the members of the public to speak.

One member of the public questioned if the works proposed to be carried out the following day and one day the following week would be more permanent than the previous patching repairs which disintegrated within a few weeks. C'llr Dan Morris told the meeting that these were temporary repairs and the road would be scraped to remove the hump in the middle of the road, the ditches and grips cleaned out and the potholes filled. He hoped it would hold until the resurfacing work was carried out.

Another member of the public told the meeting that the road through Smethcott would also be closed for Severn Trent to carry out work the following day which may cause problems. C'llr Dan Morris replied that this was unavoidable given that the work on the road from Dorrington to Picklescott was being carried out as emergency works. It would not be a complete road closure and there would be restricted access.

C'llr Dan Morris was thanked for all his efforts in expediting the repairs.

Another member of the public reported potholes by Jinlye. C'llr Ecob agreed to drive that way home after the meeting and report on FoxMyStreet.

Another member of the public asked if the road would be resurfaced from the crossroad to Smethcott. C'llr Dan Morris said this was also in the 2024/25 budget.

Members of the public were reminded that they could make reports on FixMyStreet.

Standing Orders were then reinstated.

### **(b) Any further highway issues to be reported**

C'llr Burton had sent her apologies for the meeting but had asked the clerk to report that the road from Leebotwood to High Park has many many potholes and although she has reported on FixMyStreet nothing has been done. This road is well used by locals and visitors accessing the Longmynd.

C'llr Dale told the meeting that while the road works were being carried out on the road from Dorrington to Picklescott he would, once again, jet the drain by New Hall. However, he added that this requires a more permanent solution to stop flooding at this point.

Pot holes by the Lynches were reported at the meeting and would be added to the reports on FixMyStreet.

C'llr Ecob agreed to put a notice on the village WhatsApp group urging residents to report highway issues on FixMyStreet.

No further highway matters were reported.

### **(c) Environmental Maintenance work**

Jeremy Dale continues to carry out the Environmental Maintenance work. He handed the Clerk his account for 2023/24 together with a list of the work which he had carried out.

The Clerk told the meeting that no announcement has been made if the Environmental Maintenance Grant will be available for 2024/25. The Parish Council do have the £1,500 matched funding built into the 2024/25 precept.

C'llr Hibbot-Morris thanked C'llr Dale for the work he had carried out to a very high standard near her property

## **9. Finance**

### **9.1 Accounts due for payment**

The following accounts are due for payment:-

HMRC Tax due on Clerk's salary £118.60 Cheque No. 000524

Clerk salary and expenses Feb/Mar, The claim totalled £497.43. Cheque No. 000523

Information Commissioner Annual Data Protection Fee £40. Cheque No. 000524

J Dale Environmental Maintenance Work 2023/24, £3,000 plus £600 VAT making a total of £3,600. Cheque No. 000525

It was proposed by C'llr Phillips, seconded by C'llr Hibbot-Morris and unanimously agreed that the above accounts be paid.

C'llr Starnes told the meeting that the notice board in Picklescott needed repairing. He agreed to obtain a quotation before the next meeting

### **9.2 Balance held at Bank**

The Clerk presented the bank reconciliation.

After payment of the above accounts, the balance at bank is £1,780.84. This includes the following sums:- .

CIL	£ 379.09
Neighbourhood Fund	£1,041.43
Actual PC Balance	£ 368.32

It was proposed by C'lr Dale, seconded by C'lr Phillips, and unanimously agreed that the bank statement and the bank reconciliation provided a true financial record. The Chairman then signed the bank statement and the bank reconciliation.

assets.

## **11. Shropshire Council Report**

C'lr D Morris gave the following report

### Budget

The financial pressures on councils across the country are immense and are only getting worse, with many struggling to balance their budgets. Demand for many services, particularly social care, continues to soar. This is made harder by rising prices from high levels of inflation over a long period of time. In Shropshire, our budget can't meet demand for many of our services and we cannot continue the way we have in the past. The situation is even more acute for reasons unique to our county.

25.7% of Shropshire's population is aged 65 and over. In England the average is only 18.6%. By 2043 this gap is forecast to grow. SC has seen a growth in children looked after. This has increased by more than 80% since 2020.

Shropshire is the 2nd largest inland county in England and sparsely populated. SC has less than one person per hectare compared to a national average of more than 4. Travel and fuel costs make services more expensive to deliver.

Around 77% of the SC budget is spent on social care. This includes: looking after people who are older or have learning difficulties; and looking after children and families, including children in care; safeguarding; fostering; education; and those with special educational needs and disabilities. SC expects that figure to increase more as demand for social care continues to grow, meaning there is even less to pay for other services. In the past year, SC has already saved £41.3m but this is not enough, more must be done in 2024/25.

Specifically, SC is focusing on the following areas:

- Reducing third-party spend: The council spends some £376 million with companies, organisations and services from outside the council. This cannot continue, and SC must find ways to reduce that spend.  
Income generation: Considerable sums of money come into the council from areas such as parking charges or planning fees. SC must maximise income whenever and wherever possible.
- Managing demand: SC must dramatically reduce demand for our services. If it fails to do so, these pressures will overwhelm the council in the very near future.
- Right-sizing and reducing our workforce: SC must review every service provided, and have the right people, doing the right jobs, delivering the right services, at the right times. Inevitably, this means that the council will become a smaller organisation with fewer employees.

- Reviewing capital assets: As the council becomes smaller, it will need fewer assets such as offices, which will also reduce day to day running costs.

The average Shropshire Council Tax charge is lower than the majority of other unitary councils, ranked 42nd out of 63. Shropshire Council Tax Charge: £1,725, Average Shire unitary charge: £,1793

HM The Queen is in Shrewsbury on Wednesday 27 March

Shropshire children receive secondary school place offers  
Children across the country on Friday 1 March 2024 found out which secondary school they have been offered a place at for the academic year that starts in September. In Shropshire Council's area, 2,974 children applied on time for places at secondary schools, with 89.7% – 2,667 children – offered their first preference school. All who applied on time have been offered a place, with 98.4% allocated one of their preferences, and 1.6% allocated an alternative preference. This year's figures for the Shropshire Council area are:

- Number of on-time applications – 2,974
- Number allocated their 1st preference – 2,667 (89.7%)
- Number allocated their 2nd preference – 225 (7.6%)
- Number allocated their 3rd preference – 37 (1.2%)
- Number allocated one of their preferences – 2,929 (98.4%)
- Number allocated an alternative preference – 49 (1.6%)

Shropshire Council has welcomed February's announcement of £136.4m to improve transport infrastructure in the council area. The money is part of the Government's new £4.7bn Local Transport Fund, which reallocates money saved from cancelling the northern leg of HS2. The money covers a period of seven years. The council will be able to choose how to spend the money, and will continue working with local communities to decide how to invest this funding in line with their emerging priorities and strategies

During this announcement, which was made at Leebotwood Village Hall, MPs Stuart Anderson (the candidate for South Shropshire at the next General Election) and Roads Minister Guy Opperman met with Becky Hill to discuss the need for a Pelican Crossing in Leebotwood. The minister promised to take this up with Highways England. HE have said that they were doing a survey this month to help decide on the feasibility of such a crossing, and we await feedback from this.

Shropshire Council has been shortlisted for a national award for the impact of its new approach to maintaining and improving the county's roads. The council is one of the finalists for the 'Innovation' award at the LGC (Local Government Chronicle) Awards 2024, with the winner set to be announced in June. By 2020 the council's previous approach to highways maintenance had resulted in a backlog of 19,000 potholes and other defects on the council's roads. As a result, a new 'mixed economy' model of highway maintenance was introduced, which saw the council review its existing highways maintenance contract with Kier, launch new in-house operations and energise the local supply chain. Shropshire Council was also the first council in the country to support and use a new procurement system designed to encourage

innovation in highway maintenance, enabling it to speed up repairs while reducing procurement costs and ensure compliance. The new approach has resulted in:

- 75% reduction in the cost of repairs between 2019 and 2023 – saving £1.4m per year. Whereas 90% of repairs were temporary in 2019, 90% are permanent in 2023.
- A reduction in the backlog of pothole repairs from 8,576 in 2020 down to 2,122 in 2022.
- A fall in drainage complaints from 1,000 in 2020 down to below 150 in 2023.
- Residents have recognised the difference the new model has made – year on year, public satisfaction in highways is up 25%, according to the National Highway and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey.

Shropshire is a large, rural county with 3,206 miles of roads – long enough to stretch from London to New York – and well-maintained highways are critical to so many aspects of life. In 2020 Shropshire's road network, crucial for county prosperity, faced a crisis: mounting pothole backlogs, poor repairs and severe budget strains. The 'sole provider' contract model became both unfulfilling and unsustainable. So a strategic overhaul was essential where the council pioneered a 'mixed economy model' and formed 'find and fix' in-house teams for local, reactive services, complemented by an in-house drainage team and contracts with local providers. The Council realigned it's core contractor to leverage their strengths, and the result is a responsive, sustainable repair strategy, substantial savings, enhanced investment in Shropshire's highways and a ground-breaking model for local government. The model not only yields savings and enhances responsiveness, it has also bolstered local SMEs and has the potential for greater community engagement by increasing grant money to enable town and parish councils to take on local highways maintenance activities. The savings generated have allowed more resources to be diverted to other tasks and greater levels of spend on preventive maintenance.

This approach has garnered growing nationwide interest from other highways authorities at an opportune time with many coming to the end of existing contracts. The council believes this model can and will be replicated by other councils, delivering huge benefits across the country. Andy Wilde, SC's assistant director of highways, has spoken about the council's new model at national events including the Local Councils Road Innovation Group Strictly Highways Conference, and participated in an innovation panel debate at Highways UK.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May (Annual General Meeting)

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.45pm