

Shrawley Parish Council

Chairman's Report – 2008 / 09

1. Composition of Council

The seven councillors, namely Chris Freeman, Barbara Jones, Jennie Nicholson, Peter Burkes, Tom Marsden, Mike Partridge and myself, remain in office as we have done for the past 6 years.

Susan Gill continues to be our Malvern Hills District Councillor whilst Alwyn Davies has this year been Chairman of Worcestershire County Council. We all thank Susan and Alwyn for the hard work they put in representing us.

2. Meetings

The Parish Council has met six times during the year. It normally meets on the fourth Monday of alternate months in the Village Hall, although this has sometimes had to be changed because of Bank Holidays. These meetings are open to the general public although actual public attendance is normally somewhat lacking.

Your Parish Councillors have a combined attendance record of 88% during the year with 4 councillors attending all 6 meetings and 2 missing just one. This is a slightly higher level than in the previous 5 years. Unfortunately our Local Police Officer has attended no meetings in the past 12 months. Office holders were:

Chairman	Richard Tesh
Vice Chairman	Mike Partridge
Clerk to the Council	John Plumridge
Planning Committee	Chairman and other councillors as applicable
Footpaths / Rights of Way	Richard Hall
Website	Tony Tilly

3. Governance

There have been no reported breaches of the Code of Conduct adopted in 2002 and it has not been necessary to consult the file of Standing Orders. The Council continues not to apply for any Councillor allowances including for the Chairman.

4. Flooding

It is now nearly two years since the summer floods. The District Council appointed consultants to make recommendations for improvements to those most affected, including around the Rose & Crown. It is disappointing to report that despite raising this at a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in Malvern nearly six months ago there appears to be little obvious progress. However, there has been more attention to the clearing of drains and we hope this will continue.

5. Roads

This has been the year of the roads. January saw the B4196 closed for 3 weeks for kerbing and resurfacing. The resurfacing element was undertaken efficiently but the kerbing took for ever. There was much disruption, a lot of inconvenience and some anger. The Police did not do themselves any favours by booking locals for going through the road works at a weekend when many were told that it would be alright.

Holt Bridge has been found to be structurally weakened and is subject to a 7½ tonne weight limit. It may well be over a year before the long term consequences are fully known. After an initial increase in

heavy lorries coming through the village, matters do appear to be more settled. At the same time, Severn Trent wanted to close the road from the bridge into Ombersley for up to 10 weeks in order to install a 4" water main. Following a public meeting, they are undertaking a fundamental review to try and minimise the disruption and inconvenience such a measure would cause.

We have taken a number of initiatives on speeding. As a Quality Parish we were allocated 15 hours of the Vehicle Activated Speed sign which was deployed mainly outside the Village Hall. Alwyn managed to get us a wire monitoring system for a week which recorded the number of vehicles and speeds 24 hours a day in 3 different places. Our analysis of the results has been sent to the County Council and the Police, but to date no-one appears to want to take ownership. I have been told that the speed problem in Shrawley does appear to be worse than in a typical village.

6. Precept

The Parish Council increased its recent precept by 3.9% from £5,150 to £5,350. However, because there are more occupied dwellings this translated into a 2.8% increase per household, or around £1 during over the whole year for most households. We continue to debate the appropriate level of expenditure for the services we aspire to.

The Parish Council tries to maintain balances of around 12 - 15 month's expenditure, which it considers adequate for a council of our size and nature. At the end of the financial year we had balances of £5,763 – about in the middle of our range.

The Parish Council received an unqualified audit for 2007 / 08. The cost remained at £120 plus VAT as our "turnover" exceeded £5,000. I would like to thank Tony Tilly for again undertaking the task of Internal Auditor to the Council.

7. Planning

The Parish Council has a statutory right to be consulted on planning applications, and we take our responsibilities seriously. The number of planning applications since this time last year has been 20, around the average for several years.

These 20 applications related to 12 different properties and included one listed building consent accompanying a full planning application together with 5 properties making more than 1 application.

- 11 were approved first time, including the LBC, 2 amendments to applications previously approved and 1 application approved and subsequently amended.
- 1 was an amended resubmission of a previous application that had been refused,
- 1 was withdrawn by the applicant and then an amended application approved,
- 1 was initially refused but then an amended resubmission was approved,
- 1 application was withdrawn but an amended application may be forthcoming and
- 3 were refused, an alternative solution was found for the first, a technical certificate of lawfulness was also refused along with a proposal to extend KDO which was not supported by anyone living or working in the village.
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There are no applications outstanding. I believe the planning department is performing very much better than it was three or four years ago, but still needs to be kept on its toes.

8. Regional Spatial Strategy

I have spoken about this in previous years, noting it is the mechanism for delivering the Government's target of 3 million more houses by 2026 and commenting it had all the ingredients of a right old "horlicks". It is now at the Public Enquiry stage, being held in Wolverhampton. One of the proposals is to build some 3,500 houses between Worcester and Broadheath, apparently without the provision of

infrastructure such as river crossings and additional employment opportunities. Lower Broadheath Parish Council is taking a lead on this and I believe should be supported. Perhaps Susan and Alwyn can update us.

9. Consultation

It is pleasing to report the volume of paper received from the various bodies has much reduced, although to the detriment of the recycling targets. However, we still receive many “comics” from public bodies which are of dubious value and a scope for savings.

10. What else has been happening

- The Private Litter Picker is still operational and although it has not yet been possible to get MHDC to make a contribution.
- Problems remain with the New Inn Car Park but there is little more the Parish Council can do at the present time. There is also significant noise disturbance when outdoor musical events are held and this problem has been reported to both the District Council and Police.
- The path between the Rose & Crown and New Inn is better but needs constant attention. We were again unsuccessful in our bid to get the path resurfaced.
- New signs have been erected identifying Rectory Lane and I have been promised one is to be erected specifically identifying 1 to 6 Rectory Lane.
- An application has been made to join the P3 Footpath Scheme.
- Elgar Housing is reviewing its lettings policy following our representations.
- A sign commemorating the rebuilding of Glazen Bridge has been erected, the daffodils planted last year have been in bloom and help has been offered in the planting of saplings in Shrawley Woods.
- The server provider for our Website has gone bust. However, the County Council is providing facilities for Parish Councils and we were already investigating these.

11. And finally

Thanks are expressed to my fellow Parish Councillors, County Councillor Alwyn Davies and District Councillor Susan Gill for helping the village in so many ways, John who is now Clerk to Shrawley, Little Witley and Great Witley Parish Councils and CS Garden Clearance who are our Parish Lengthsmen.