

Shrawley Parish Council

Chairman's Report – 2011 / 12

1. Composition of Council

The seven Councillors elected unopposed last May have served throughout the year, namely Pippa Armstrong, Anna Dorrell, Chris Freeman, Barbara Jones, Tom Marsden, Mike Partridge and myself. Susan Gill is our Malvern Hills District Councillor elected until 2015 whilst Alwyn Davies serves on Worcestershire County Council where there are elections next May. I am sure we all thank Susan and Alwyn for the hard work they put in representing us.

2. Meetings

The full Parish Council has met six times during the year although there have been 2 additional meetings to consider planning applications along with a further Open Parish meeting to consult on the application for The Rose & Crown site. Your Parish Councillors have a combined attendance record of 84% across these meetings.

Office holders were:

Chairman	Richard Tesh
Vice Chairman	Mike Partridge
Clerk to the Council	John Plumridge, Jo-Anna Moyle and Mark Keld
Footpaths / Rights of Way	Don Barton
Website	John Mills
Internal Auditor	Chris Evans

3. Governance

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

4. Roads

This time last year we were contending with work to strengthen Holt Bridge as well as a large turnout because of the speed limit review. The Holt Bridge work was completed ahead of schedule but we await the imminent implementation of the speed limit review.

The first phase of extensive work was finished today with completion of the edge dressing from Weather Lane, Astley to Shrawley Village Hall. This will be followed at around the end of July with surface dressing of the road – effectively tar and gritting. Shortly afterwards the road will be white-lined and new signs erected including a reduction in the speed limit to 40 mph from Crundles Lane to Glazen Bridge.

We will then see Community Concern / Safer Roads Partnership undertake a two month education programme followed by speed enforcement if education is not effective. Residents are warned that the cameras regularly catch a lot of locals speeding.

We do however remain very concerned about the very heavy lorries, some with trailers, coming through the village, a significant proportion being foreign. Part of the edge-dressing was to the road from Galzen Bridge to Crundles Lane that was completely resurfaced only a few years ago but was now breaking up. Was it fit for purpose?

5. Broadband

It is disappointing that the telephone cabinet at Weather Lane was not upgraded as part of the Stourport exchange modernisation. Shrawley and neighbouring villages are now dependent on the County Council / Government project to bring superfast broadband to rural areas. We are fortunate to have Cheryl Perry tonight who will tell us about the commitment to bring a minimum speed of 2M to 100% of Worcestershire households by 2015 along with 30M to 90% of the population and how this will be achieved.

6. South Worcestershire Development Plan

This will become the joint plan of Malvern Hills, Worcester and Wychavon Councils covering the next 15 years or more. Currently out for consultation, it is due to be adopted by September 2013. The assessment of the “preferred options” is that there will currently be little effective change for villages such as Shrawley.

The Parish Council has responded to the consultation. It does believe there needs to be a greater degree of flexibility within the planning system so as to be more responsive to local needs and requirements. In particular, Planning Officers should take into account earlier decisions of the Development Control Committees when assessing applications.

7. Planning

The Parish Council has a statutory right to be consulted on planning applications and we take our responsibilities seriously. After a period of almost a year without a new application, the last 9 months have seen 17 applications for 12 different properties:

- 7 properties have seen their application approved
- - including one unanimously by the Northern Area Development Committee
- 2 were withdrawn by the applicant and
- 3 are pending awaiting a decision, although all have taken longer than 8 weeks.

8. Precept

The Parish Council maintained its 2012 / 13 precept at £5,500. The total council tax bill is almost the same as last year, with a miniscule reduction due to the number of dwellings occupied. 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 2011 / 12 financial year we had balances of a little over £7,000.

The Parish Council received an unqualified audit for 2010 / 11 from the external auditor. Whilst the cost for the current year audit remains at £120 plus VAT as our “turnover” exceeds £5,000, it is understood this may be waived in future years for those council's like ours that have a “turnover” of less than £10,000.

9. Consultation

It is again pleasing to report the volume of paper received from the various bodies continues to reduce, at the detriment of the recycling targets, whilst the number of “comics” of dubious value from public bodies has indeed been reduced.

10. Other matters

- The Police are no longer attending Parish Council meetings as a matter of policy
- they should be attending the Annual Parish Meeting.
- The trees at the War Memorial have been replaced within budget
- plaque ordered to commemorate planting as part of Diamond Jubilee
- Commemorative Mugs have been purchased for distribution to each child
- The vehicle activated speed sign has been deployed on several occasions
- Continuing problem of litter along the B4196
- can this be devolved to the Parish Council along with some funding?

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, CS Garden Clearance who are our Parish Lengthsmen as well as our Footpath Officer Don Barton, Web Master John Mills and Internal Auditor Chris Evans.

John Plumridge, our former Clerk, is currently not well and I am sure we all wish him well. His replacement, Joanne Moyle, resigned part way through the year because of unforeseen family circumstances. We now have Mark Keld, a resident of New Inn Lane, who has also recently become Deputy Town Clerk of Droitwich.