

# **Shrawley Parish Council**

## **Chairman's Report – 2013 / 14**

### **1. Composition of Council**

Six councillors have served throughout the year, namely Pippa Armstrong, Anna Dorrell, Barbara Jones, Tom Marsden, Mike Partridge and myself. Chris Freeman resigned at the end of March 2013 and was replaced by John Lee, co-opted on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, who will serve like the rest of us until May next year. Susan Gill is our Malvern Hills District Councillor also serving until 2015 whilst Phil Grove has completed his first year as our County Councillor.

### **2. Meetings**

The Parish Council has met 9 times during the year, 6 planned bi-monthly meetings and 3 additional meetings to discuss speed awareness together with the co-option process. Your Parish Councillors have a combined attendance of 83%, compared to 79% last year and 84% the year before, with two recording 100%.

Office holders were:

Chairman	Richard Tesh
Vice Chairman	Mike Partridge
Clerk to the Council	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. Speed Awareness**

The Parish Council decided:

- unanimously at a meeting on 12th August 2013 and after extended discussions to invite the Safer Roads Partnership to undertake a Speed Awareness Campaign,
- by majority vote not to install gates at the main entrances to the village at a meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2013; cost would be circa £2k supported by £1k WCC Divisional Grant
- unanimously at a meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014 to acquire a Vehicle Activated Speed sign costing circa £3,400 + VAT including posts, fixing brackets and data collection.

There is currently no further information about when the Speed Awareness Campaign will start. It is understood there is just one location within the village where the mobile speed camera can be located and this is where it is likely to catch, at least initially, some 60% of motorists. The Safer Roads Partnership has expressed concern it could become a money raising venture with there being no long term change in motorist behaviour along a relatively safe stretch of road.

### **5. Broadband**

There has been some progress during the year, but painfully slow:

- ✓ the Ombersley and Great Witley exchanges are to be upgraded in the October to December 2014 quarter but there is no news on whether Shrawley will benefit
- ✓ the cabinet at Weather Lane is scheduled for upgrade following the Severn Trent work currently ongoing but again it is unclear how much Shrawley will benefit
- ✓ Airband have submitted a £1½m project to bring “fibre to the house” for much of Shrawley and parts of Astley & Dunley. We should know by 2<sup>nd</sup> June if successful.

## **6. South Worcestershire Development Plan**

The SWDP is still a long way from being approved. The Inspector decided to take the Examination in Public in 2 stages. The first during October 2013 largely considered housing numbers and the SWDP total of 23,200 across the 3 councils over 25 years was considered insufficient. A reconvened hearing during the middle of March, at which there was little or no community involvement, resulted in a revised spuriously accurate figure of 28,370.

The councils are currently reworking their site proposals ahead of a six week public consultation probably during July and August before submitting a revised SWDP possibly in September ahead of the second stage Examination in Public towards to end of the year or later. It looks as though the SWDP will not be adopted until 2015, possibly after the next elections.

In the meantime the Council's planning policy is in disarray as witnessed by its approval of an outline application for up to 62 dwellings on the Astley / Stourport border. This site has been classed as open countryside for the past 30 years and continued to be so in the SWDP. In my personal opinion I believe the Council's Officers carry a large element of responsibility in not only failing to assess correctly a 5 year land supply but also a developing a plan lacking in vision and practicality. Heads should certainly roll, starting at the top of the organisation.

## **7. Planning**

The Parish Council has a statutory right to be consulted on planning applications and takes its responsibilities seriously. Since this time last year there have been 9 planning applications covering 8 different properties:

- 5 applications, including 2 for the same dwelling, have been approved
  - one only after significant modification by the applicant
- 1 for the Rose & Crown site was withdrawn by the original applicant
  - new applicant has submitted a fresh application which has not yet been validated
- 3 are awaiting a decision

Also an application refused by MHDC in 2012 was allowed on appeal.

The latest application for the Rose & Crown involves demolition of the modern flat roof extensions and converting the former pub into a single house whilst building 3 new detached dwellings part way into the former car park. Previous issues appear to have been addressed.

## **8. Precept**

The Parish Council has again maintained its 2014 / 15 precept at £5,500. At the end of the 2013 / 14 financial year we had balances of a little under £9,500 but this is expected to fall to around £7,000 at the end of 2014 / 15 or some 1¼ times the precept.

The Parish Council received an unqualified audit for 2012 / 13 from Grant Thornton the new external auditor. Our Internal Auditor has concluded the 2013 / 14 accounts were well kept and all was in reasonable whilst recommending a couple of improvements. A revised audit regime is being proposed which may mean greater emphasis on the internal audit and no external audit.

## **9. Other matters considered during the year**

- Discretionary Rate Relief for The New Inn
- Withdrawal of the £3m bus subsidy
- Provision of the emergency services
- Banning double-axle trailers at household refuse sites
- Project Verde and our bank account transfer to TSB
- Continuing problem of litter along the B4196
  - An area MHDC needs to consider greater funding.

## **10. And finally**

Thanks are expressed to my fellow Parish Councillors, County Councillor Phil Grove and District Councillor Susan Gill for helping the village in so many ways, our Clerk Mark Keld, 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.

There will be Parish Council elections next May. At the present time at least two long serving members are proposing to stand down. We will be seeking to find “new blood”.

RLT 19.05.2014