



## High Offley Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting Held at 19:00 hours on Thursday 11th May 2023, at Woodseaves Village Hall.

### Councillors Present.

E. Halls; D. Turpin; P. Haslop; R. Hockenull; P. Mason; M. Smith; M. Turvey; Staffordshire County Councillor M. Winnington, together with 2 Clerks.

No members of the public were present.

#### 1. Welcome.

Councillor Halls opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

#### 2. To Receive Apologies for Absence.

None received.

#### 3. To Receive the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

Minutes approved

#### 4. To Receive a Report from the Chair of High Offley Parish Council.

Councillor Halls presented her report and a copy is included with these minutes.

#### 5. To Receive a Report from Borough Councillor Mike Smith.

Councillors Smith presented their report and a copy is included with these minutes.

#### 6. To Receive a Report from County Councillor Mark Winnington.

19:15pm Councillor Winnington arrived, presented their report and a copy is included with these minutes.

#### 7. To Receive Questions from Parish Electors.

There were no electors present.

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 19:18 hours.

B. Nicholls, Clerk to Council. Monday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023.



# High Offley Parish Council: Chairman's Annual Report May 11<sup>th</sup> 2023.

## Introduction

Over the last 12 months, High Offley Parish Council (HOPC) and the community have returned to a much-welcomed and more normal way of interacting and engaging following the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the start of the 2022/23 financial year, 10 parish council meetings were planned and 10 were held. The meeting in June 2022 was postponed by a week to ensure the meeting could be quorate.

At the last annual Parish Council meeting in May 2022, Councillor Emma Halls was re-elected as Chairman, and Councillor Donna Turpin re-elected as Vice Chairman.

Councillor Sally Celicia has sadly been unable to continue in her role as Councillor due to ill health. We wish Sally all the very best and thank her for her faithful service to the Parish Council and community. Her vacancy, as representative for High Offley, became available in January 2023 and has been filled by Councillor Peter Haslop who was co-opted to the Parish Council in February 2023.

In March, our valued Parish Clerk, Stu Ridgewell, notified the Parish Council of his intent to further his studies and so will leave the Parish Council in May 2023. Recruitment to fill his role commenced in March 2023 and concluded in April 2023. The Clerk's successor is to be approved and announced in the May 2023 parish council meeting. The Councillors thank Stu for his commitment, guidance and support and wish him all the very best for his future.

14 planning applications were reviewed by the Parish Council over the year.

In October 2022, Councillors considered whether to adopt the General Power of Competence (GPC) under the Localism Act 2011. It was decided not to adopt its provisions because it was felt the GPC is specific to larger parish councils and did not bring sufficient advantage to HOPC.

In March 2023, the Parish Clerk and Chairman prepared updated versions of the Privacy Policy and Accessibility Statement in readiness for the new Parish Council website's release.

In June 2022, the Parish Council was pleased and proud to support Woodseaves Academy CoE school with a celebration of the late Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, and we further collaborated with the Village Hall Committee this year to celebrate the coronation of H.M. King Charles' III in early May.

## Updates from the Year

The year 2022/23 has seen a number of matters conclude or continue to progress in the parish:

SBC opened a consultation period on the Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options document on 22/10/22 until 12/12/22. This document detailed potential sites for future housing development in the parish.

High Offley Parish Council held a public meeting on 24th November 2022, which was attended by over 70 local people, to gather feedback and questions on the Local Plan. HOPC provided a response to SBC in December 2022 which commented on the 'disproportionate and incongruous' nature of a potential large-scale development at the top of Woodseaves. The response included comments about the sewerage system, green space, parking and infrastructure. The response was broadly supportive of the creation of a garden village at Meecebrooke as a viable alternative.

## **Highways Matters**

### **a. Speed signage on Stafford Road**

HOPC was successful in achieving the move of the 30mph speed sign at the end of Dicky's Lane, on the Stafford Road, out to the parish boundary. This paves the way for the purchase and installation of a speed indicator device in the place of the original 30mph sign.



### **b. Speed Indicator Device**

Since the move of the speed sign, HOPC has agreed the purchase of a speed indicator device and is pursuing permission to install via a Section 50 application to the Highways team at the County Council.

### **c. Speed Camera stats**

In September 2022, speed camera statistics were requested from Staffordshire County Council. It was advised that the recording 'brain' of the cameras is no longer shared.

Month 2022	Notices of Intended Prosecution Issued	Top Speed
Jan	72	47
Feb 95 45	95	45
Mar 120 51	120	51
Apr 116 45	116	45
May 139 53	139	53
Jun 133 50	133	50

### **d. Low Bridge at Shebdon**

In July 2021, an issue was reported with drivers of Large Goods Vehicles trying to access the Knighton Premier Foods Factory via the low bridge in Shebdon. In June 2022, SCC Highways visited the site of a missing 'Unsuitable for HGVs' sign. SCC confirmed that following their visit a work order was raised to have the signs reinstated.

### **e. Shay Lane Culvert Collapse**

In September 2022, Councillors discussed the closure of Shay Lane as a result of a collapsed culvert. The inconvenience and disruption to local people and businesses was represented to the County Council, culminating in parishioners presenting County Councillor Mark Winnington with a petition containing 613 signatures to take to the County Council to impress the considerable impact the road closure was having in terms of increased costs and time.

The road closure notice is valid for 18 months, so the Parish Council asked for a timetable for the investigation, planning, preparation of drawings, procurement of materials and construction of a new bridge.

With limited information available, HOPC's Clerk has contacted John Henderson at Staffordshire County Council for a response to his letter concerning Shay Lane and has included David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport, in the communication. This matter will carry forwards to the next financial year.

### **Moscow Lane Sewerage Works**

In July 2022, members of the public expressed their concerns regarding Severn Trent works being carried out to the sewerage plant at Moscow Lane, Woodseaves, including work being carried out at unsociable hours and damage to the road caused.

HOPC provided support by contacting Severn Trent and inviting their representative to a subsequent meeting, contacting Environmental Health, as well as representing the issue to senior members of Stafford Borough Council. It is understood that alternative access has now been secured to the works, and efforts are ongoing to repair the plant at site.

### **Website and accessibility**

HOPC Councillors voted to move to a new, fully accessible website, built by Staffordshire County Council (SCC). The website has been set up and is due imminent release, though there has been a small gap between the closure of the old site and the launch of the new. The new site will feature images of the parish supplied by local people.

The website will be [www.highhoffleyparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.highhoffleyparishcouncil.org.uk)

### **HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee**



The Parish Council collaborated with Woodseaves CE Academy to organise and fund celebrations for HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022. A 'street party' with picnic on the school field, open to the whole community, was held on Friday 3rd June. Part of Dicky's Lane was closed to accommodate the celebrations. The council funded commemorative coins for every child at the school and in the community, as well as a dedicated tree with plaque to be located at the school.

### **Noticeboard at Shebdon**

In May 2022, it was acknowledged that the parish council's noticeboard in Shebdon was in a poor state and not suitable to be readily repaired. As such, the parish council voted to replace the board with a metal green version, which is currently being installed.

### **Bus Stop**

In April 2022, decal signs denoting that the bus stop was funded by HOPC were added to the bus stop by Willowcroft. Thanks to our supplier, Dave Sanders (aka 'Titch') who kindly donated the signage for free.



### **Royal Mail Post box at Grub Street**

High Offley Parish Council complained to Royal Mail regarding the removal of the Grub Street postbox without notice or warning in summer 2021. The box, which was designated as an NHS priority facility during the Covid pandemic, was used by more than 20 households around Grub Street, near High Offley. The matter was raised with MP Sir Bill Cash and MP Paul Scully. Royal Mail stated the stand on which this postbox stood became unfit for use, which was shown not to be the case. Unfortunately and regrettably, HOPC were unable to secure the reinstatement of the postbox.

<https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/staffordshire/2023/02/07/residentsand-community-leaders-battle-for-more-than-a-year-to-get-their-post-box-back/>



### **Signs for School**

In July 2022, 4 signs were purchased by HOPC for Woodseaves CoE Academy to help with parking and speeding in the vicinity of the school. The child silhouettes were purchased using part of a monetary gift, intended to benefit local children, to HOPC from the dissolved pre-school.



### **Warm Space Coffee Morning Contribution**

In February 2023, the Village Hall Committee sought a donation from HOPC of £100 toward the purchase of mugs for the provision of Warm Space Coffee Mornings. It was unanimously agreed to support this request to fund the purchase of mugs.

### **Wooden Planter**

HOPC was very grateful to local business, EFC Fencing LLP, who very generously provided timber in March 2023 to High Offley Parish Council to replace a rotting planter in Woodseaves. Councillors Mark Turvey, Peter Haslop and Phil Mason coordinated and creating the replacement.



### **Local Defibrillators**

In July 2022, the Clerk reported that a new battery and two heating elements had been received and passed on to Eccleshall First Responders for installation into the parish's two defibrillator machines. Councillors were unanimously in favour of making a £50 donation to Eccleshall First Responders for their help with and work on the defibrillators.

### **Civic Amenities Visits**

A waste lorry stationed in Woodseaves for an hour to help residents rid themselves of domestic waste that cannot be recycled on October 29th 2022. A further visit occurred in March 2023, ahead of the anticipated April visit, which limited the number of local people who could take advantage of it.

### **Public Rights of Way Working Group**

Due to the repeal in early 2022 of DeFRA's requirement that all PROW had to be logged on the definitive legal map by 2026 it was proposed by Cllr. Halls that there was no requirement for a formal working group and instead, maintenance and monitoring of the parish rights of way should revert to a volunteering group status only.

### **Finance**

- a. In April 2023, the Annual Governance & Accountability Return was submitted;
- b. The bank balance carried forward from the Financial Year 2021/22 was £19,196.08, which includes ring-fenced funds already allocated for the Speed Indicator Device on Stafford Road. The balance carried forward into the Financial Year 2023/24 was £19,519.86.
- c. Grant to Woodseaves Parent & Toddler group – in March 2023, the group was awarded a grant of £250 through a unanimous council vote.
- d. Proposed Budget for 2023/24 - Council unanimously agreed not to increase the precept demand.
- e. Summary:  
Balance Brought Forwards £19,196.08  
Gross Income £6177.24  
Gross Expenditure £5843.46  
VAT Reclaim £349.44  
Balance at end of FY22/23 £19,519.86

### **What's next – HOPC focus for FY23/24**

1. Coronation of King Charles III – HOPC are pleased to be supporting the parish's street party on Sunday 7th May 2023 2-6pm at Woodseaves Village Hall.
2. Speed Indicator Device – HOPC will continue to pursue completion of the Section 50 application in support of a speed indicator sign installation on Stafford Road.
3. Website launch – HOPC hopes the new, accessible website will launch in early FY23/24.
4. New Clerk – HOPC looks forward to welcoming the newest member of the team in May 2023.
5. Moscow Lane – HOPC will continue to monitor progress of the work to fix the sewerage plant and repair any consequential damage.
6. Shay Lane – HOPC will continue to pursue information on the repair /replacement of the culvert, and also, following the repair, will consider the impact of replaced signage that directs HGVs away from the low bridge in Shebdon.
7. Local Plan 2020-2040 – HOPC will remain engaged with the Local Plan programme and will represent the interests of the parish as and when appropriate.

Councillor Emma Halls,  
Chairman High Offley Parish Council

30th April 2023



## **Report to High Offley Parish Council May 2023 from Former Stafford Borough Councillors Mike Smith and Patrick Farrington**

As we approach the end of our 5th term of office we are proud to say that over the last 20 years we have maintained our promise of keeping council tax below inflation. This year when 90% of councils are increasing their tax by the maximum permitted we are increasing ours by only 1.9%. Over the 20 years prices have risen by 100% and our council tax by just 35%. In addition, in order to help the poorest in our borough when inflation is running at 10% and more we have enabled 1700 people to pay no council tax at all and another 1700 have had theirs reduced by £90.

The Borough council's finances are continuing to recover but have some way to go get back to income levels of 2019. The increased energy costs for our two swimming pools remains a big worry but we are working with Freedom Leisure to address this and unlike other councils who have closed pools ours remain fully open.

We continue to drive costs down by increasing efficiencies, we have been sharing back-office services with Cannock Chase DC for some time but the decision to share our Chief executive with them is now permanent and he is presently appointing his senior management team to enable us to share all services. This is expected to save a further £1m across the councils and will enable us to let out more of our office space.

The new Local plan is still in draft stages but we are committed to the idea of a Garden Village to relieve the pressure of excessive new housing in our rural villages.

We have both attended your Parish Council meetings over the year when Borough appointments have not clashed and hopefully advices and assistance we have given have been welcomed.

## **Report to High Offley Parish Council May 2023 from Mark Winnington CC**

The last year has been challenging as we all have had to re-boot our lives as we start to put the Covid 19 pandemic behind us. We must all take time to reflect on not only the awful aspects of this horrible time, but also on the good things that have come out of it especially people helping people. Just as life was getting back to some form of Normality, we then have had the cost of living crisis to deal with. Regardless, I have noticed that the fantastic Community Spirit shown in our towns and villages has continued. Many of the great Community initiatives have continued as has the use of our local small shops and businesses'.

I have partnered with Parish Councils and Community groups to look at what we can do to help with the Climate Change crisis we find ourselves in, no-one can deny that we are all suffering from extremes of weather, from heatwaves to rainstorms, gales and below freezing temperatures.

As a consequence of these Weather extremes, there have been serious flooding issues affecting our infrastructure and an increase in road and pavement defects. I and many residents have been reporting these problems to highways. I am pleased to say that after much chasing from me, we have had many defects dealt with, but there are more to do!

Many thanks to all those people who volunteer locally, we do live in a beautiful part of Staffordshire, with a great Community spirit.

Stay safe,

Mark Winnington