### HIGHLEY PARISH COUNCIL

**An ordinary meeting of Highley Parish Council was held on Tuesday 5th October 2021 at 7pm at the Severn Centre, Highley**

**Present**: Vice Chair,  **D.Tremellen**  Cllrs. D.Thakrar, T.Quinn, A.Rodgers, M .Moore, N.Waterson, N.Barker, J.Rakic , T.Pinches , E.Moore, M.Williams, J.Marshall

Clerk: Mrs.E.Preston

Parishioners: 2

**00.Parishioners Time - No Comments**

***Declaration of any disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter to be discussed at the meeting. Members are reminded that they are required to leave the room during the discussion and voting on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, whether or not the interest is entered in the register of member’s interest maintained by the monitoring officer.***

**01 Apologies for absence and reasons for absence – Cllr. P.Vinall - Holiday. Cllr. J.Law – illness.**

**02. Police attendance at meeting – PCSO Jackie Fletcher introduced herself to the Council. She gave statistics on crime in the area and reported that generally it was low. The CCTV had proved useful if a recent case in helping to trace the movement of a vehicle in a criminal case with the assistance of Cllr. P.Vinall.**

**03 To confirm the minutes of the meetings dated 5th September 2021 – *RESOLVED* to accept. Chair signed the minutes.**

**04 Matters Arising**

CCTV – Meet with Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner who was impressed with the CCTV System. She gave the parish council details of grants to apply for to add the additional technology to track vehicle number plates through the village.

Castle Inn – Court proceeding took place on the 27th September. Owners of the Castle pleaded not guilty and as part of their plea claimed that they intended to sell the premises.

Youth - Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner also visited the Highley Reach Youth Club as part of her visits.

Communication Working Group – Cllr. Tracy Pinches reported that the Communication Group had met with the Severn Centre to discuss the Christmas Light Switch on. It was proposed to hold this on 27th November and the Civic Awards to be given on this day from 12pm to 1pm.

Packhorse Bridge (Donkey Bridge) – Richard Knight from Shropshire Council said that he had now been promised the funds or repair the Donkey Bridge but they were not yet available to him He is going to contact the director who made the commitment to release the funds for repair to find out what he now has to do for funds to be released .

**05.Correspondence**

SALC – New in Brief

Shropshire Council – Review of planning committees – survey filled out and clerk to respond on behalf of the Council.

SALC – submission of local plan – 3rd September

Severn Centre Board Meeting 13th October – Maintenance and the MUGA (Multi-use Games Area) to be added to the Agenda

SALC – Launch of the Community Foundation on 21st October – anyone wishing to attend please contact the Clerk.

**06. Planning**

Reference: 21/04311 - Address: Manor House , Main Road, Highley, WV16 6NG

Proposal: Replacement of UPVC windows with traditional timber casements and front door, replacement of insensitive putty/silicone sealing to brick noggin panels externally, where brickwork meets timber framing, repointing to areas requiring attention to external elevations, repainting of external brickwork with a more appropriate paint affecting a Grade II Listed Building. – ***RESOLVED NO OBJECTIONS***

Reference 21/0456/FUL - Proposed Residential Development Land North Of Bache Arms Off Coronation Street Highley Shropshire. Following discussions it was ***RESOLVE***D that there were no planning ground to Object to this application.

**07. Highley parish Council Accounts – External Auditors Report - RESOLVED to accept. Cllr. Thakrar thanked the Clerk for her work in preparing the Audit .**

**08- Annual Parish Meeting – Civic Award Nominees - to be held on 27th November at 12pm, prior to the Christmas Fayre at the Severn Centre. Nominees agreed.**

**09.Revenue and Resources Committee**

**Parish Plan Review – It was RESOLVED to recommend to the Parish Council that the MUGA be added as a priority to the parish plan. To also contact Chelmarsh Parish Council to arrange a meeting to look at the Parish Plan as it covers both the Highley and Chelmarsh area. AGREED by Parish Council.**

**Recruitment of Clerk. – RESOLVED to recommend that the Resources Committee look into this further at a separate meeting. Clerk to arrange meeting**

Welcome Back Fund – Clerk to contact Shropshire Council to agree expenditure of the Christmas Lights. A meeting with Matthew Mead from Shropshire Council to be held to look at the work on the High Street.

**10.. Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal - RESOLVED that a donation of £250 be given to the Poppy appeal. RESOLVED to pay £220.00 for a new Tommy Figure to replace the stolen one.**

The Remembrance Day parade will take place on Sunday 14th November, assembling at the Severn Centre at 10.00 and parading to the war memorial at 10.30. Chair D.Tremellen asked if anyone had a Marquee that could be used for the Highley Band. Discussions took place and Cllr. Waterson to find out prices and report back to the Clerk.

**11. Severn Centre Annual Contract Review - *RESOLVED* that no changes were needed to the contract**

**12. Severn Valley Country Park – Grant - *RESOLVED*** to pay a £4000 Grant .

**13. Highley Youth project – Grant -** *RESOLVED* **to pay £2400. towards the Highley Reach Project.**

**13. Terms of Reference Cllrs. T.Quinn and A.Rodgers**

**Proposal -** To create and document a process to be followed when an ‘eyesore’ such as rubbish is reported to the Parish Council. The process applies to residential properties only.

Following discussions, it was ***RESOLVED*** that the present system of reporting the issue to the Clerk to deal with be maintained. It was not felt good practice for the parish council to write to individual property owners. This to be dealt with by the Highley Action Group.

**14.Shropshire Councillors Report** Well, as far as Covid is concerned, the county council was still taking it seriously enough to announce that the last Full Council was once again held at Theatre Severn. Not the best venue because movement is restricted, and the audio isn’t the best during debates. I wasn’t best pleased at having to miss that meeting - but health issues took priority - because there was a debate and vote on the crazy, short-sighted decision to close Stourbridge Road highways depot, the base for winter highways maintenance in the east of the county, a closure that would leave just the three depots in the west of the county. That was a decision made by someone who couldn’t read a map!

I was by now hoping to have at last come to terms with the new way of working, which isn’t working whatever anyone says because it is not a case of “the same, just different”, it is totally foreign to someone like me who has spent seven years (pre-lockdown) working face-to-face with officers. Those working relationships work because they smooth the working of the council, but new councillors will know officers only as a name under a face on a monitor

I don’t know about you, but outcomes are unquestionably better if either party feels comfortable enough to raise a laugh to relieve the tensions generated by both having to work with limited resources and finding a way to work with those limited resources, especially over a remote connection. But no more.

We could have tried to pretend that things are still how they were, were it not for what seems to be a deliberate policy of separating-off the staff functions from what I always thought were the critical functions that kept a representative democracy functioning, one of which was the answering of awkward questions from elected representatives acting on behalf of their constituents. And not just any old answer, either, but one which explained the logic of how the answer got there, using words we all understood the meaning of, not words that had been spun so many times anyone could make them mean anything.

Then out of the blue on the 16th of September I’m presented with a headline in the Shropshire Star telling me that Shropshire Council is no longer looking to close Shirehall and move its “civic centre” into the Pride Hill shopping centre. I’m left sitting staring at the screen in disbelief. I have challenged and questioned the sense of that move since the very beginning and met closely argued opposition from the outset, so I’m sitting there reading what’s being said VERY carefully. What’s going on? We don’t know because the Executive is refusing to say what plans they have, if any, for the future. (Mind you, that reluctance to engage only stretches as far as councillors, they’re always ready to talk to the media, in fact it’s the Shropshire Star and Oswestry Advertiser who keep me up to date with happenings at Shirehall, although taws ever thus. Says it all!)

With a few reservations over the commercial proposals in the £380,000 consultant’s report presented to us councillors by ex-Leader of the Council Peter Nutting and ex-Chief Executive Clive Wright, there was/is a lot of sense in retaining the Shirehall well into the future. It might not be a beautiful building (although it has its charms), but to those of us who were around in the 60’s functionality was at the core of a lot of civic architecture and the Shirehall was built for the purpose of civil government.

Internally it needs hardly any remodelling and what it does need can be easily realised because once you take the internal walls down you have a blank canvas, spaces that can be redesignated to suit any need. Structurally it is sound, only infrastructure like air conditioning and double-glazing would require major work, and then only in terms of time, not fitting it. Likewise, a fire sprinkler system can be retro-fitted, as it will have to be in most older civic buildings anyway.

And the beauty of it all is that, because of the building’s layout all the work can be done on a rolling schedule with minimum hassle.

But that subsequent decision to close and sell off and demolish Shirehall was made under pressure from service directors and councillors with egos they felt they had to live up to who had different ideas about the working environment they wanted to match their aspirations as empire builders.

Distinctly uneasy with the decision to go back on those earlier plans and not a little confused, given the original enthusiasm to go with the consultant’s report, I asked the service director (Mark Barrow) driving the plans for closure in favour of the move to Pride Hill, for the data on which the decision to condemn and demolish Shirehall had been based. I was sent the £380,000-worth of specialist consultant-generated data on which the original decision to RETAIN, remodel and repurpose Shirehall had been based!

These people are paid six figure salaries. Triples all rounds.

**15 Finance:**

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| Severn Centre | Room Hire – Highley Reach | 66.00 |
| Severn Centre | Room Hire- Parish Council | 37.50 |
| SYA | Hire of Youth Worker | 2400.00 |
| PKF Littlejohn | Auditor | 480.00 |
| HMRC | Tax & NI | 77.56 |
| Royal British Legion | Wreath and Donation | 250.00 |
| Royal rightish Legion | Replacement Tommy Figure | 200.00 ? |
| Severn valley Country Park | Grant | 4000.00 |
| S.J.Maintenance | Maintenance Work | 220.00 |
| M.E.Preston | Salary |  |
| NPower | Street Lighting |  |
| Bill White nurseries | VAT on last invoice |  |
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Signed: Chair ………………………………….. Date: ……………………………………………..