

SHREWLEY PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 29TH MARCH 2022

PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Cllr Robert Wesbury

Neal Soutter resigned from the Parish Council in May after eight years as a Councillor, due to work commitments. Neal was Vice Chairman and a committed Councillor who worked hard to get things done and I have been grateful for his help and support. Also, Jo Day resigned in September and I thank her for her contribution to the Council.

As a result, the Council had three vacancies which we have now filled. Jen Cleary and Rachel Hinton were co-opted in September and Sarah Underwood joined in March. Jen and Sarah are resident on Shrewley Common and Rachel lives in Pinley.

In May, Jan Matecki was elected as our local County Councillor to replace Les Caborn who did not stand for re-election.

Shrewley Parish is in the Green Belt and new development must meet the requirements of both the National Planning Policy Framework and the Warwick District (WDC) Local Plan. The PC, as a statutory consultee on Planning Applications, has commented on 11 applications during the year.

We have been pressing for Warwickshire County Council (WCC) for almost 2 years to replace the Vehicle Activated Speed sign outside Barn Close Nurseries, which was demolished in a road traffic accident. We have now been advised that a new sign will be installed in the next 6-8 weeks.

The gates planned for the entrances to Shrewley Common have now been ordered by WCC and will be installed in the near future.

The PC also arranged for vegetation on the bend on Station Road to be removed to improve visibility and safety on this road.

In October, the County Council consulted Parishes on a new Highway Verge Management Strategy for improving wildlife diversity by cutting verges where appropriate only once a year with cuttings removed. The PC has proposed two sites for this new regime – one in Case Lane and a second in Mill Lane, Little Shrewley.

Many thanks to the Solihull Bramblers (the footpath working group of Solihull Ramblers) who volunteered to fix all our outstanding footpath problems. This work has now been completed at no cost to the Council. Please report any new problems to a Councillor.

We continue to press for an on-site meeting with the Canal & River Trust to discuss improvements to the towpath at the south-east end of Shrewley Tunnel which floods during the winter and is very muddy. Although some minor works have been carried out, further major investment is needed on the drainage system alongside the towpath to provide a more permanent solution.

A local Housing Needs Survey was last carried out in October 2014 and the PC recently commissioned a new survey by Warwickshire Rural Community Council (WRCC). The information is used to assess specific needs for affordable and market housing in the Parish. Preliminary results will be presented at the Annual Assembly.

Our thanks again to Roly Robinson and Keith Duffell for maintaining the village greens in Shrewley Common and Little Shrewley over the past year. Thanks also to Neal Soutter who made and installed the new replacement noticeboard in Little Shrewley.

Finally, my thanks to our Clerk, all Councillors and members of our local organisations for their efforts and support over the year and their contribution to our community.

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR - Jan Matecki

In May 2021, elections were held to select the councillors for Warwickshire County Council. I was honoured to be elected as the representative for the Budbrooke and Bishop's Tachbrook Division, in which Shrewley is located, replacing Les Caborn. The Conservatives formed the new administration with an increased majority.

Covid still continued to dominate many activities throughout the year, with vaccinating the population being a priority. As a county, 86% of those eligible for vaccination received at least one dose, which includes 70% of under 18s. In Warwick district the numbers are 86% of eligible residents receiving at least one dose, with 74% of under 18s doing so. This compares to the national figure of 80% and 60% for under 18s.

The new Integrated Care Scheme (ICS) for Warwickshire is taking shape and a formal submission to Health England will be submitted in the coming weeks. As part of the new ICS, the county has been divided into "places". The South Warwickshire Place (SWP) covers Warwick and Stratford District areas. The SWP will be able to focus on the health needs of South Warwickshire residents as priorities. These priorities have been identified as Respiratory Health and Inequalities, Children and Young People, and Mental Health, Suicide and Bereavement. The SWP Board will now be working to put in place plans to tackle these local issues.

The Fire Service had Ben Brook appointed as new Chief Fire Officer appointed in July 21. This was as a result of Kieran Amos retiring after 30 years of service in the fire sector, and as the Chief Fire Officer in Warwickshire since 2019. Sadly, only 4 months later, in November Kieran passed away after an unexpected short illness.

A national campaign for 20 is plenty was brought to the council as a motion to have all residential areas of Warwickshire reduced speed limits of 20mph. A task and finish group (TFG) was set up to look into the feasibility of such a proposal. The TFG determined, and recommended to the Cabinet, that a widespread 20mph in all residential areas would be impractical for many reasons, including defining what was a residential area or not, and would probably have a negative effect on areas that needed 20mph limits such as around schools. The TFG recommended that the decision on 20mph limits should be a decision taken more locally, where the requirements and support for such limits were better known.

In Shrewley, the new Vehicle Activation Sign is finally being replaced after several years, and work has already started to have the sign installed. County Highways will also lay down a new road surface along this stretch of road later in the year, which will further help reduce accidents. The new gates for the village have been designed, and plans have been passed onto the Parish Council for review. These should also be installed in the coming months.

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCILLORS John Cooke, Richard Hales and George Illingworth

Events in the last year have obviously been greatly influenced by Covid but we have taken big steps to working with Stratford District and your District Councillors have worked with your Parish Council on a number of matters.

Covid has affected the District Council in various ways. For most of the year the majority of office-based officers had to work from home with all the complications of remote working. Outside work by officers and contractors continued and operations such as rubbish and recycling continued as normal. Initially all councillors worked remotely as well and all meetings from Council down were held over Teams links. Interestingly the live coverage on You-Tube was much larger than that usually obtained in a real meeting. In the Autumn the Government required decision making meetings to resume for real. This caused some problems as the Town Hall in Leamington Spa was incapable of holding the entire Council in Covid-safe conditions and alternative sites have had to be used. Smaller meetings such as Planning have been able to continue more normally.

Of course, similar rules applied for your Parish Council and the District Councillors could very easily apply to join in your distant meetings.

The other major aspect of Covid was support to the community. Much of this involved the rapid distribution of various grants from the Government to businesses and organisations affected by the lockdowns. In total Warwick District Council issued about £45 Million of which a proportion came to Shrewley. This came to this Village Hall and various pubs as well as other businesses. The officers at the Council were congratulated on their efficiency in dealing with these distributions. Councillor Richard Hales was the finance portfolio holder dealing with this.

During the year we have worked very closely with Stratford District in order to save your money. Not only has there been co-operation between departments but in a number of cases senior officers have shared responsibility between the two Councils reducing the numbers involved. Quite apart from the advantages from such co-operation councillors have been investigating the actual merger into one single District Council for South Warwickshire. In December separate meetings of the two Councils agreed to such a merger and the matter is now with the Secretary of State for decision.

Part of the common work, which will continue whether the merger proceeds or not, is a Local Plan for South Warwickshire. The search for land has already started and details of land submitted has already been circulated for consideration. Councillor John Cooke is leading this project as part of his portfolio.

Councillor George Illingworth has led on certain planning matters in the Parish.

Your District Councillors have played a full part in supporting Shrewley by attending your Parish Meetings and following up with relevant actions wherever possible.

SHREWLEY PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL REPORT – Clerk, Eleanor Choudry

The 2021/22 budget set by Shrewley Parish Council was £7,903 and has reduced for 2022/23 to £5,904. Councillors agreed that the PC will no longer ringfence £1k towards Village Hall projects. The Village Hall Committee would be eligible to apply for a grant if required. It was also agreed that £2k be transferred to the Reserve Account for future discretionary grants bringing the balance to £5,500 of which £3,500 is ringfenced for election costs. The precept equates to the equivalent of £23.12 for a Band G household. 2021/22 ends with a healthy balance of over £5,600, which includes £124 for Friends of Hatton Station. All parish financial information is available on the Parish Council page at www.shrewley.org

HATTON COMBINED CHARITIES – Zara Hadfield

The Hatton Joint Charities include: The Charity of Catherine Throckmorton founded before 1652, The Charity of Jane Baker founded in 1849, The Charity of Jane Norcliffe founded in 1897, The William Edwards Coat and Gown Charity founded in 1818, together with a bequest made by Mr. Butler Miles. The first four charities were “combined” in 1909, and the Butler-Miles bequest added later.

50% of the income from the Throckmorton Charity is required to be used for the upkeep of the fabric of Hatton Church – the incumbent rector becomes a trustee upon appointment. The remainder of the Charity’s income is used to provide some immediate short-term assistance to residents and students in need. In 2021 an amount of £1500 was distributed in the Parish of Shrewley.

Sheila Light and Gill Ward have recently retired as trustees from the charity after many years of committed service. They have been replaced by Zara Hadfield and Sally Lowe. Your correspondent for the charity within the Parish of Shrewley is now Zara.

Trustees meet three times a year to discuss current charity funds and establish who in the local Parishes would benefit from the Charity. This year we have been pleased to support residents with money towards heating and electricity bills and supply household appliances. During lockdown, trustees met via zoom. This month, for the first time in a while we were able to hold our meeting in person.

Only those who are resident in the Parishes of Beausale, Hatton, Haseley and Shrewley are eligible to benefit from the charity. It is not always easy for the trustees to be aware of people who would benefit from the charity; we are always pleased to hear from anyone who might be in need.

There is an advertisement in the Ferncumbe News giving details on how to contact the Charity. If you are aware of someone who would benefit, or you yourself need help, and meet the above criteria then please do get in touch.

THE CONNIE NEWTON TRUST – Robert Wesbury

The Trust provides assistance for persons over the age of 45 who live or have lived within Shrewley and neighbouring parishes and are suffering financial hardship.

The Trust has made one grant of £2000 during the year.

After many years as a Trustee, Monica Sparks has resigned as a Trustee. Monica became a Trustee when the Trust was set up and her local knowledge and contacts in the community have been invaluable to the Trust.

If you feel that there is someone who could benefit, please contact a local Trustee in confidence (Norman Winnett, Sylvia Green, Kemble Everitt or Robert Wesbury). Their contact details are available on the Parish notice boards and on the Parish website www.shrewley.org.

SHREWLEY WOMENS INSTITUTE – Beverley Baker

It has been a very different time for Shrewley WI like other organisations, due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Our last live meeting pre Covid was in the village hall in March 2020 when the ladies made spring bonnets, so an entertaining happy afternoon.

We did manage to meet as two groups in September hosted by The Durham Ox when our members were able to mix and chat. From then until July 2021 we kept in contact via our newsletters and Zoom meetings. We had family members and “volunteers” speaking or demonstrating: plant care, aromatherapy massage, cookery demonstrations & reflexology and a splendid presentation about how set designs for television are produced.

In July when Covid restrictions allowed, our members came to the village hall for a cream tea prepared by the committee, followed then at the beginning of August with a lunch and speaker. Our first “normal” meeting was on 2nd of September when we were entertained by Maggy Farmer who talked about the “Queens of Country Music” interspersed with her singing songs from the eras.

On 16th September, which coincidentally was the Wi’s 106th birthday, we had a coach trip to Sudeley Castle with a stop at Broadway for coffee and shopping.

We met monthly then with speakers and celebrated Christmas with Cathy Morris singing, but had to Zoom in January due to Covid again. Hopefully we are back on track with our meetings now. We are supporting Warwickshire Refuges during 2022 with fundraising and collections of foods, toiletries, cakes and “pretty pants”.

LITTLE SHREWLEY TELEPHONE KIOSK – Linda Wesbury

Since the purchase of the Little Shrewley telephone box by the Parish Council in 2017, this remains a focal point in Little Shrewley, maintained by local residents. It was decorated for Christmas and the next objective is for the box to be repainted, hopefully this summer.

SHREWLEY & DISTRICT GARDEN SOCIETY – Juanita Bolster

January to March 2019 was a lovely start to the year with three super Speakers, then Lockdown hit us all. In June 2020, we were allowed to meet outside and felt sufficiently confident to hold our annual Garden Party. We were grateful to Jean Dance for offering her beautiful garden for the purpose. 43 Members attended and all agreed it was wonderful to meet up again after so long.

Although a few clubs were starting to reconvene, the Chairman and Committee agreed to put off our meetings in The Village Hall until October which was our 27th Anniversary of the Garden Society and we commissioned a beautiful decorated cake. We had a speaker for November then our AGM and Christmas Party in December. Carol Tudor-Evans as Chairman and the Members of the Committee were all happy to be re-elected. Many thanks to all.

However, attendance was low during these months, so the meetings were held off until February, when people were feeling a little more confident about venturing out. We then met at Hatton Church where Rosemary Mitchell gave us an excellent and passionate talk on snowdrops, especially those found around the grounds of the Church.

In March we finally were back in the Village Hall, and attendance has picked up a little. We had a super Speaker Alison Foster aka The Garden Chemist. Alison talked about poisonous plants and wicked weeds, combining beautiful plant photographs with the chemical molecules, explaining exactly how our skin, digestive system and lungs are affected by the plants toxic chemicals. We have a delightful local visit to the garden of Artist Kay Elliott booked for May and have organised a coach trip to RHS Garden Bridgewater for end of June, with wonderful Speaker Jack Willgoss talking about Late Summer Gardens and of course, our Garden Party in July.

Many thanks must go to our hard-working committee, with Carol Tudor-Evans at the helm, Herbert Andrews as Treasurer and Juanita Bolster as Secretary. Also, much gratitude goes to Jan Belcher, Sheila Clarke, Sylvia Green and Val Whitaker.

We would welcome visitors to pop in and listen to any of the talks, or come along on our visits and coach trips. All will be warmly welcomed.

FERNCUMBE YOUTH CLUB – David Dyke

Like many organisations 2021 has been very challenging due to Covid 19 which has resulted in the Youth Club being closed for long periods.

We have been able to maintain a virtual youth club for 2 hours on a Wednesday with many members benefitting from the social contact which in turn has helped and benefitted our members keeping them connected and also maintaining a sense of community during this very challenging time.

Recently we have been able to welcome the members back physically for interaction, fun, games and tuck shop treats. We are really looking forward to the year ahead.

We really appreciate the support and funding of all the local parish councils and charities as this makes a vital difference to the running of the Youth club.

VILLAGE HALL - David Lawrie

The hall was closed except for Children's tuition (when permitted) during the pandemic, but it was regularly and carefully maintained so that it would be ready for resumption of normal social activities as soon as the law allowed.

Shrewley Parish Parents were very successful in amassing the funds needed to construct the children's play area on the field at the back of the hall; they got it ready for use by June last year, and it has been well patronised since it opened.

The Hall finances have benefited from a number of Government grants during the pandemic aimed at helping village halls to be ready to continue their service to the community when pandemic restrictions allowed. The earliest user of the hall as pandemic restrictions eased was the children's tuition group. Shrewley W.I. then began to use the hall in a restricted manner, but the Social Club could not use it until October last year, and that was with slightly restricted social contact.

The Hall's water supplier misused their direct debit facility last year to take over £31,000 from the hall's accounts because of a misread meter reading. The matter was resolved when the meter was found to be faulty and replaced, but the dispute lasted several weeks, threatening financial collapse. We had another financial scare last year when a grant awarded by the Parish Council was siphoned off by a cybercriminal, and noticed too late for the bank to compensate.

Thanks to some of the Treasury pandemic funding, the interior of the hall was redecorated. It is several years since the local community joined together to paint the hall after the rear extension was completed, and the results have been appreciated.

Comparing the Hall's facilities with neighbouring premises, the Committee is looking at the possible replacement of the hall with a building which will comply with current environmental standards into the future and provide facilities to match our neighbours.

An informal local group has been formed to use our telephone kiosk as a lending library and exchange similar to the one in Hatton Station. To this end, the Village Hall provided the paint and materials for the group to restore the kiosk, and constructed some internal shelving. The facility was formally opened on 8th September, on the occasion of Mrs. Jeane Holland's hundredth birthday.

As evidence of the success of the new kiosk library, a user left the following note in the kiosk: *"Thank you for this wonderful community space. I've really loved visiting and have found some excellent books to read here. Likewise, I've left a few for others. I hope they are enjoyed as much as I have enjoyed visiting. Until the next time....."*

The first post-Pandemic major event was an ABBA retrospective concert organised by the W.I. on 27th November, which was a huge success. This was followed by the Hall's Christmas Craft Fayre in December. The Social Club has resumed its programme of live shows and movies, the most recent event being the Jazz concert planned for Friday 18th March. There will be a Movie Night on 1st April, a Quiz Night on 6th May, another movie night on 13th May, and of course a Platinum Jubilee event on 3rd June with a pig roast and a Barn Dance.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH – Rachel Hoult



The joint Hatton Station and Shrewley Neighbourhood Watch is a voluntary organisation committed to working with residents and family, friends, and neighbours, to provide information and coordination in support of a safe and secure environment for individuals and communities within the area

We work closely with the Parish Council, the local Warwickshire Rural West Police Team, and sister schemes in neighbouring village communities to focus on reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and advising on practical ways to improve our protection and safety for greater security in our homes and communities.

Our local NW scheme is active and has seen small changes in membership, mainly driven by the addition of new residents to the area. The Local Organiser (Rachel Hoult) and a small band of Co-ordinators are spread around the two main villages and nearby areas. Their role is to provide points of contact for communication with the NW scheme and our Police contacts – ensuring new residents moving into the area are invited to join, disseminating information about crimes which have taken place in the area, and focusing on matters of crime prevention. The past year has been challenging with the Covid situation, but hopefully in this next year we will be able to be more actively visible within the community.

The main change this past year has been the retirement of the local Police NW co-ordinator Paul Coleman. His role has not specifically been replaced, however ongoing comms are still received from Warwickshire Police in the form of regular alerts. Both nationally and locally, the Police are using email and new technology to establish a wider and more inclusive support network, to collectively meet emerging challenges such as 'County Lines' activity and urban crime spreading into soft rural areas. Fraud and crime alerts, and practical support information about crime prevention will continue to be distributed regularly, to keep everyone aware of current issues like internet scams and telephone-based fraud, burglary, car crime and thefts from sheds and outbuildings, so we can all take action to help ourselves and our neighbours to avoid becoming victims!

Join our Neighbourhood Watch and Be Informed!

To get yourself on the distribution for email crime and fraud alerts, please contact your NW Local Organiser – email: rachelhoult7@gmail.com - including your postcode and house number so we can put you in touch with your local NW Coordinator, and to ensure you receive the appropriate crime alerts for your location.

FRIENDS OF HATTON STATION – Paul Tilley

FoHS is undergoing a reorganisation. Jenny Honeysett is now the Secretary/Treasurer of the group and has produced a draft Constitution which will be voted on at the next meeting. Once this is completed a bank account will be opened with Graham Bamford as joint signatory. The group will then get SPC to transfer the remaining grant money. I am stepping down as coordinator and the group will be electing a Chair and Committee members.

There are ten members at present and I have asked for new members to come and join us via the Hatton Station Phone Box What's App group.

The main work this year involves the dismantling of the small planter by the car park which has now reached its sell by date; it has rotted away. The main planter has had some remedial work undertaken to strengthen it, but it too is nearing replacement. The group will be seeking funding to get this work completed.

It was good to see the car parks full to capacity a few Sundays ago when the station received railway royalty in the shape of Flying Scotsman. Passenger numbers seem to be recovering after the pandemic, but there is still some way to go to get back to pre Covid levels.

The renewal of the sewage pump serving the houses on Station Approach is ongoing with barriers still in place. This means that the group has lost its source of rainwater. Alternatives are being investigated.

Residents of Hatton Station reading this report are encouraged to join the group. Contact details can be found on the Shrewley website.

HATTON STATION PHONEBOX - Sheona Alemi

Hatton Station Phonebox has become a central part of our little community. With thanks to initial funding from Shrewley Parish Council It brought a group of volunteer neighbours together in May 2018 to renovate it and then established its own What's App group with over 60 local residents. The group and box have become a vital part of community life by connecting local residents who can now use the Phonebox book exchange, share excess fresh produce and seeds from the garden and support each other in all manner of ways. This additional support network has become essential during the recent lockdowns- neighbours have been able to share resources, buy and sell used furniture and share recommendations for local trades etc- not to mention sharing timetables for the run throughs of fabulous steam trains through Hatton Station.

A crowd fund was set up in December 2020 to raise funds for a Christmas Tree, adjacent to the phone box, which meant we could have a small, socially distanced, gathering for the big "switch on!" A big thank you to Barn Close Nursery for their help with the tree. Hopefully this Christmas, when COVID is behind us, we can have a bigger gathering for the 2022 switch on.

In addition to the telephone box renovations, local residents used left over paint and painted the nearby Royal Mail post box (with their permission) in 2020. The remaining funds are being held in reserve for any future repairs and renewals that either of the boxes might need.