**Highley Parish Council**

**The Highley Annual Parish Meeting** was held at the Severn Centre on Tuesday 2 nd May 2023 at 6pm.

The Chairman of the Parish Council Mr. P. Vinall took the Chair. There were 6 Parish Councilors and 2 Parishioners present. Shropshire Councilor Mark Williams was also present.

**Apologies**: Received Cllr J. Marshall and Cllr J. Griffin

**Minutes of Previous meeting**: Agreed as a true and correct record.

**Matters arising from minutes**: No comments.

Parish Council Chairmans Report: ‘This year has flown by and had its challenges throughout the year, I was very honoured to be voted in as Chair by my fellow Councillors following the previous year which I spent as Vice Chair to David Tremellen who sadly could not make as many meetings as he would like to have through ill health. We have gone through some major changes at Highley Parish Council over the last 2 years following the local elections, not only did we see a new County Councillor elected (Mark Williams), but we also had 8 new Parish Councillors elected too. This gave us an opportunity to alter some of the ways we organised ourselves, changes that will continue to be made in the future, all aimed at ensuring we are more proactive and that we can communicate more with our parishioners going forward, you may have noticed our new notice boards around the village as well as the one in the Severn Centre. Then in October 2022 Ella Preston our clerk for 31 years retired, we had the foresight to employ her replacement back in January to make the changeover as smooth as possible, thank you Ella for your service and welcome to Holly Cordey our new clerk. It was an honour to represent Highley for our Kings Proclamation at the Quarry in Shrewsbury something that will last with me for years to come as well as being able to take part in an historic occasion.

We have restructured the committees and working groups who are in the process of tracking the state of all our assets and setting out a full maintenance Highley Parish Council 2 programme, all public rights of way have been walked and issues logged, the group are working closely with Shropshire Councils Footpath Officer to improve these. After a 3 year wait, we will soon have the “donkey bridge repaired” following bi-monthly calls and emails to Shropshire Council chasing these repairs up.

It is noticeable how Shropshire Council is interacting with us more being it the Wellbeing and Health Teams, Highways teams and a visit from the head of Shropshire Council Lezley Picton, there is also talk of more support for youth services that is a MUST for Highley, but this will not happen without volunteers coming forward, we offer through our partners SYA free DBS checks and Safeguard training.

The resignation last year of Dr Allans surgery for Highley has resulted in Bridgnorth Medical Practice winning a tender to provide services, a meet and greet event was held on Friday 21st April and was well attended. We have worked closely with NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin as well as Shropshire Council and our MP Philip Dunne to come up with the best plan for Highley, over the next few weeks the result of this should be available, but, there will be improved medical services based in Highley, please keep a look out for further information.

I can’t emphasise enough how important your Parish Council is to the village, without it you could for example have Bridgnorth or another town making decisions on your behalf.

The Parish Council is the 1st tier of Government and is aimed at representing the local community, all of us are volunteers with the exception of the clerk, we are responsible for many things in our village such as benches, bus shelters, Public rights of way / Footpaths, some street lighting, flower displays and much more, we also have dialogue with various members at Shropshire Council especially involving Highways, Footpaths and legal matters.

As stated previously we are still short of two councillors and have advertised these positions, this shortage put more pressure on the existing volunteers, it would be nice to have some applications out of the 3500 plus people living in Highley, come and make a difference! Highley Parish Council If you are interested in the future of Highley and wish to be involved we still have two vacancies for Parish Councillors, if interested please contact either myself or our Clerk on clerk@highleyparish.co.uk where we will be more than happy to have a chat regarding what it involves.

I would like to say a huge thank you to all Councillors who have supported me over these last two yours, your work, encouragement, and commitment has been a credit to you.

During our meeting later this evening I will not be standing for another year as Chair but will remain as a Councillor for the foreseeable future, whoever takes over from me will have both my support and best wishes for the future.’

**Ed Andrews on Severn Valley Country Park**: Ed explained his role within the country park including all the sites that he oversees. Ed explained the reliance on volunteers and how if needed this may be able to be extended to village items which are related. Recently fencing has been replaced by volunteers in the Pitt bank area- within this site there is a rare breed of orchids which have been protected. Further volunteer work has been undertaken with the help of Severn Trent

Replacing the sets on closed coppice. Station Road toilet block has been jet washed and re-opened. Ed had to attend the site two weeks ago due to reports of vandalism. The electric door locks seem to be helping to discourage this. A new bin will be installed within this park. A further planned job for this year is for the pond to be re-landscaped and lined with a target of June for this to take place. In the vicarage lane area, there are some significant pear trees which will be registered this year due to there old age and hopefully this will then become part of a registered walk. Ed explained that these trees are of great significance and should hopefully help create a new walk for parishioners. However, due to the vandalism Ed is reluctant to mark these trees, due to this perhaps enabling vandalism to take place.

Ed facilitates school visits with this being the park’s busiest period up until June- with schools attending from as far as Birmingham. Highley Parish Council 4 The Country Park has several events to cover a variety of audiences such as a Dawn Chorus Bird Walk, Wild Toddlers and Bat Walks.

Ed thanked Highley Parish Council for the ongoing funding support which helps enable the park to run and provide such great opportunities for the public.

**Elaine Moore from Highley Companions**: Elaine explained how the group serves a purpose to help any parishioners within the village for companions who suffer with dementia. This also in turn can provide a much-needed break for carers of those with dementia. This is crucial and Elaine has seen firsthand how this can affect carers. This service runs fortnightly for three hours at the Parish Hall. Food is provided alongside a variety of activities. Recently they have had musicians attend and they are holding a coronation party this week. The companion group also provides outings such as a canal trip, Bewdley museum and Cosford. These trips are charged with a nominal sum and funding is gained through donations and grants to enable the group to run. There are 8 trained volunteers alongside Elaine. 1:1 care is also provided for some clients. Elaine explained that the hall hire fees for this year increased significantly and they had to negotiate to get a suitable agreement. Highley Companions is the only dementia group within the Bridgnorth area. There are between 15-20 regular clients of the Highley Companions Group. The age range is between 60- 95 of clients who attend.

**Emma Aspin (Carter) on Highley Community Project**: Emma spoke to all present to explain the day-to-day tasks it takes to run the Highley Community Project and how many volunteers are needed to provide this service. Emma explained how many different charities and local causes that the project supports through any money that is made, such as the walking football club, Highley Mini Minor Toddler group, Highley Primary school etc. The group is aimed at reducing food waste and also helps local people, particularly with the recent cost of living crisis many parishioners have noticed the rising daily living costs. The project is based at the Severn Centre and is run entirely based on volunteer’s time, store donations of food and recently the Astbury provided a generous cash donation to be able to purchase the community fridge. Highley Parish Council

**Any Other Business/ Parishioners time to ask any questions**: A question was raised by Councilor Thakrar regarding logging being a source of income. Ed Andrews explained that revenue streams for the Severn valley country park mainly consist of- car parks, school visits and the café which has not been as successful this past year. Ed wanted to reiterate that any profit created at the park is reinvested directly back into the Severn Valley Country Park. Ed explained that log sales is not something that the Park has pursued.

Councilor Thakrar wanted it to be recorded for the thanks extended to Elaine and Highley Companions for the service they provide.

The meeting finished at 7pm.

Signed…………………………………… Chair ………………………………………….DATE