

## **Cllr's Alan Holford and Gary Groves update for Whixall Parish Council July Meeting**

Dear Parish Councillors,

This time we have prepared a written summary report of goings on relevant to the ward for you to read. Then in the meeting itself we will just make ourselves available for questions at the appropriate agenda item.

**The White Horse** – We have held a meeting with officers – some scaffolding has been fitted to the left side of the building, and a little more is soon to be fitted internally to make it safe to re-enter and then they are looking to arrange for heritage organisations to visit with a view to accessing further grant funding.

**Wem Town Hall** – Alan had a meeting with Helen McCabe and John Dinsdale on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June. Ongoing maintenance issues at the town hall such as damp, leaking guttering and a replacement lightning rod are causing the Town Hall trustees some concern about affordability. There is an underlying issue of a poorly written, vague lease which leads to lack of clarity between the Town Hall and the property management company (which we think is a subsidiary of Shropshire Council but are seeking clarity on this). This means that there are disputes over who is responsible for each item of maintenance and whether the Town Hall are free to procure works on the open market, which they have an inkling may be more competitively priced. As well as this, there are concerns about funding shortfall for the running of the Town Hall and both cost saving and revenue generating initiatives are being brought in to try to make ends meet. I have written a detailed report from the meeting and discussed strategy with the Trustees. I have then passed all this on persuasively to the relevant portfolio holder to try and address these structural and operational issues from the top down. Since then I believe further meetings have occurred and a site visit from the property management company and some concessionary free repair and assessment works are planned. The town hall and Morgan library were both discussed in the meeting with officers on the White Horse and it does seem that the council is committed to keeping the town hall going and restoring the other two buildings; although there are challenges ahead.

**Speed Limit Concerns** – Various issues have been raised throughout the ward on the doorstep, as well as at the Wem Rural PC meetings. There is a frustration at how difficult it is to get speed limits reviewed and brought in, especially 20mph limits. Wem town has recently seen success with this on Pym's road and Lowe Hill road but I believe these changes have been years in the making and it is clear that getting a speed limit altered is an arduous process. The LibDem council in Oxfordshire have developed a new model for assessing and changing speed limits which has proved more agile and successful at bringing in the changes that local residents/councils campaign for. Shropshire council is investigating this model to see if it can be applied to Shropshire; and help us bring much needed limit changes and improvements in road safety.

**Lamppost on Mill Street** – Alan has started the process of trying to get a lamppost moved on Mill Street next to the mill dam gravel carpark. This lamppost has been placed on the narrowest bit of pavement leaving a 58cm gap to the curb. A local resident from Eckford Park has been wheelchair bound since 2023 and neither him nor his wife can drive. This has left him completely isolated from all the amenities in the town since his standard sized wheelchair is 66cm wide and they do not feel safe going 20 meters on the road between dropped curbs. The obstructing lamppost is one of the newer LED ones but the former lamppost is on the corner of the gravel carpark, not obstructing the pavement, currently hosting the 20mph digital sign. I am therefore hopeful that this location can once again be utilised and the obstruction removed. Highways have added a site visit to assess the situation to their upcoming program of work.

**Useful info on road repairs** – During our training it was explained that surface dressing, such as that recently performed on Soulton Road is very beneficial. It is often seen as a frustration that surface dressing seems to occur on roads which look pretty good on the face of it, whereas potholed roads are filled in patches only. Apparently the reason is, if you surface dress a relatively good road regularly, it staves off potholes developing for a long time and leads to a 5-6x lower cost of maintaining the road per square meter than if it is left until potholes develop. However once potholes have developed, you cannot just repair them and then surface dress over the top, you have to do a reconstruction which is 2-3x costlier than the potholes or 9x costlier than the surface dressing. Hopefully this can help us to assuage some of the understandable frustrations about the state of the roads in the county and the choice of repairs done to them. We have also increased internal pothole repair capacity by 33% and are looking to see if there is anything we can do to improve external contractor performance over the next 1-2 years in which the current main contract is due to run.

**Vaccination drive** – there is a county wide campaign to improve vaccination rates due to a fall in uptake recently and a concerning resurgence of measles cases. Childhood vaccinations, covid and flu cover are all crucial in individual and public health. The effectiveness of vaccination in an individual relies on a high percentage of the population being protected, as well as that individual being vaccinated, so it is important that everyone is encouraged to consider vaccinations.

**Hospital delayed discharges** – There has been a significant improvement in hospital delayed discharges since last year and there is a focus on making further improvements to this, taking pressure off hospital beds as well as allowing people recovery sooner in their home environment.

**Freedom Fibre** – You will have heard that Freedom Fibre are not going to fulfil their contract and have failed to raise the funding necessary. Helen Morgan is extremely disappointed by their performance and communication. It is believed that another

more established organisation will take on the contract and complete the works but it is not set in stone so we can not assume this and I'm not sure if I can name the company – but lets say its one of the telecoms giants.

**Fostering** – There is a long running recruitment drive for foster carers in Shropshire at the moment. If any residents would like further information or if you would like materials to display/put out in your newsletters etc, please let us know and we'll find out what is available.

### **Transport**

Improvements have been made to the Park and Ride services in Shrewsbury, with all three sites — Harlescott, Meole Brace, and Oxon — now offering buses every 12 minutes during peak times. These upgrades are funded through Shropshire Council's share of the government's 2025–26 improvement funding.

### **Upcoming road works –**

Road Closure: Jubilee Street, Clive

Start Date: 2nd July 2025 - 4th July 2025 & 27-29<sup>th</sup> August

Purpose: Road Closure - Stop tap - Rebuild chamber

Works Promoter: Severn Trent Water

Works Promoter Ref: LB9141201-000013995827B-01

Enforcement pattern for Jubilee Street, Clive:  
All the time

**Road Closure:** B5476, Harmer Hill to Wem

**Start Date:** 7th August 2025

**End Date:** 7th August 2025

**Purpose:** Multevo carriageway repairs

**Works Promoter:** Shropshire Council

**Works Promoter Ref:** UJ20840259496

**Enforcement pattern for B5476, Harmer Hill to Wem:** 09:30 - 16:00

**Road Closure:** Unnamed road near Dobsons Bridge, Whixhall

**Start Date:** 20th August 2025

**End Date:** 22nd August 2025

**Purpose:** Road Closure - Small meter renew

**Works Promoter:** Severn Trent Water

**Works Promoter Ref:** LB9141201-000060688968-01

**Enforcement pattern for Unnamed road near Dobsons Bridge, Whixhall:**

All the time

**Road Closure:** B5063, Hampton Bank, Northwood

**Start Date:** 14th August 2025

**End Date:** 14th August 2025

**Purpose:** Road Closure - Pole Test

**Works Promoter:** Openreach

**Works Promoter Ref:** BC008PLT2501987524032024-01

**Enforcement pattern for B5063, Hampton Bank, Northwood:**

9.30 - 15.00hrs

**Road Closure:** Aston Road, Barkers Green, Wem

**Start Date:** 18th August 2025

**End Date:** 19th August 2025

**Purpose:** Road Closure - Reinstatement to damage area.

**Works Promoter:** Severn Trent Water

**Works Promoter Ref:** LB9141201-000013963862-02

**Enforcement pattern for Aston Road, Barkers Green, Wem:**

24hrs

Many thanks,

Alan and Gary.

