

**MINUTES OF THE SHERIFFHALES ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THE 11th MARCH 2025 AT
SHERIFFHALES VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30PM**

Present: Councillors: Mr J Horne (Chairman); Mrs S Whittam; Mr Gordon Tonkinson, Mrs A Sutcliffe, Mrs L Edwards, Mrs P Hodgetts (Vice-Chairman), Mr P Bradburn and 16 members of the public present

Apologies: Cllr Mr A Edwards, Cllr Mr Neil Pulker and Unitary Cllr Mr K Turley.

1. Chairman's welcome and announcements

The Chairman welcomed the members of the public and the Council to the meeting. He introduced the members of the Council to the public.

2. Community presentations 2025

Parish AGM 2025 Report from St Mary's Church

This time last year you may remember our focus was on the "Weathering the Future" project, with significant works required to the tower, drainage and bells at St Mary's church. I am pleased to report that we have made significant progress with assessing, surveying and planning exactly what is required and we now have a clear path for what needs to be done, and the relevant permissions secured to carry out the works when funds are available.

However, it became clear during 2024 that we had a more immediate financial challenge to overcome as we were losing £1000/month trying to cover the basic running expenses for the church. So, we want to extend a really big thank you to everyone who has helped us in so many ways in recent months to help us turn this around.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Peter Bonsall and his team and volunteers for enabling us to move the choir pews back to their original and proper position in the chancel and constructing and painting the stage which has already been used for some fantastic concerts, school performances, services and most recently to display a beautiful horse drawn plough used locally and winning ploughing competitions many years ago.

Thank you also to Norman Jones and Paul Rogers for working so hard to keep the sound system and hearing loop functioning.

We want to say a big thank you to the Mums and Tots from playgroup and volunteers from Community Café led by Jo Matthews for the wonderful Harvest fair held in the church grounds attended by many from school and the village.

Community Café is buzzing with parents and children every term time Friday afternoon as they welcome the weekend after a busy week with a cuppa, delicious homemade cakes and sweets from the tuck shop. Thank you so much to the small, very dedicated team who bake and serve every week, and to all those who go along.

We are very grateful to Graham Sells and friends for the fabulous Country and Blues concert they so generously played in October. We were literally dancing in the aisles! The church was full and we look forward to welcoming them back on September 13th this year. Date for your diaries!

Thank you to the Community Choir not only for their wonderful concerts and contributions to Festival services throughout the year, but also for the amazing Advent Greening Fair at the beginning of December, which was a first of its kind and so successful.

Already this year we have held the sell out Burns Night, St Chad's guided walk and just this week a wonderful Pudding Party - celebrating pudding and crowning the Queen of Puddings 2025!

Many of these events have had the most amazing posters and marketing created by Julia Gough, to whom we are so grateful.

And because we now have superfast WiFi in church we can even take card payments!

I also want to say a huge thank you to our minister for St Mary's - Paul Warrender and his wife Susan who work completely voluntarily. They have led some super services during the year and notably for Remembrance, Christmas and Candlemas. It has been wonderful to see the church full for these services.

What has been really good so far this Year has been the fostering of a close working relationship with the Village Hall committee, and the school to collaborate and support each other, and we look forward to this developing further.

We have been delighted to be included in the new look Parish magazine and a big thank you to Pippa and Julia for including us.

We are thrilled to see the church building being used for such a wide variety of activities and are encouraged and grateful for the support across the community. We have a full calendar of varied events planned for this year including the Famous Sheriffhales Tractor Run on 25th May. If you would like to know more about what we have planned and what is coming up why not join our mailing list and receive our weekly email. Request via Catherine Rogers at families@shifnalbenefice.org.uk

Many thanks Catherine Rogers

Short Mat bowling Club – Mr Tom Leaf thanked those present for allowing him to speak, he is Chairman of this club and its the long service club in the village. Sheriffhales Bowling Club has been running for 30 years an incredible milestone. The Club is for all abilities and ages, in a relaxed and sociable environment. They meet every Monday 7.30pm – 9.30pm. It is a chance for members to stay active and meet with others, membership is £12, with a weekly subs of £2. They host a few social events throughout the year and some competitions. They currently have 15 members and they have room for 5 more. Anyone wanting to join please get in touch. The village hall enables this to happen, and they thanked those that run and keep the village hall going.

Women's Institute presentation to Sheriffhales Parish Council Meeting 2025

Good evening my name is Linda Boddison and I am the secretary for Sheriffhales Women's Institute. Thank you for inviting us to your meeting to share updates from the past year in our WI.

2024 was the 72nd year of our WI and as usual we hosted our AGM in April, our birthday party in May, and the harvest supper in October. We celebrated these events with entertainment and ample supplies of food brought together by our members. Good food, fun and lovely friendships making our WI what it is.

Our other meetings included cultural events including a cookery demonstration of Indian food and a demonstration and having a go at Chinese calligraphy. We have also enjoyed the regular craft sessions especially making Christmas decorations and cocktails with tasting of course. But in balance we have also taken part in some physical exercise in the form of bhangra dancing and line dancing which was welcomed after eating lots of cake!

One of the highlights of the year was a surprise visit organised by our President Karen. We all met at the village hall and drove in convoy to a secret location and were met by a herd of Alpacas. Much hilarity was had on the trekking expedition and the alpacas were very enthusiastic, to say the least! The evening ended up at a local hostelry for our meeting where we decided it wouldn't be appropriate to sing Jerusalem as was usual at the opening of our meetings.

On a more serious note our members were invited to vote for the National Federation of WI's campaign, each year there are 4 categories and last year the focus was dental health. This campaign raised the issues at a National level around the lack of dentist provision in our communities..

One of our members joined the Shropshire WI climate team and attended events hosted by Severn Trent and joint meetings with other WIs.

Our members also attended events hosted by other local WI's so we have formed relationships with local and county groups.

Going forward into 2025, our members have agreed that our nominated charity this year will be The Lily foundation which supports families affected by mitochondrial disease so any funds raised at our meetings will be donated to this cause.

Our programme will be as varied as ever this year with a few surprises for members throughout so if you would like to join us please come along, you would be very welcome.

Our meetings are now held on the second Thursday of the month and not the fourth Thursday as previously. Visitors can come to 2 meetings free of charge to see if they enjoy the meetings before committing to join as a member. If you would like a chat after the meeting please come and see us.

Thank you all for listening and we look forward to seeing you at future events and hopefully some of you will come and join us.

Linda Boddison
Secretary Sheriffhales Women's Institute

Sheriffhales Primary School has been at the heart of the village for well over 100 years. It has grown over the decades to include buildings which are Tudor, Victorian and modern, which give it a setting full of charm and homely feel. Major refurbishments started in 2023 have continued with internal décor and external resources such as a reading garden, new school library, Forest School provision and an even more enhanced Early Years outdoor area. In April '24, the High Sheriff opened the Preschool, which now offers 10 places for 3- year-olds.

The grounds, tucked away behind St Mary's and the Village Hall, give the children space to play and explore on grass and in woodland, and to learn in our new school garden. The garden, opened officially by the High Sheriff in June 2023, features raised beds, potting table classroom and firepit, so the whole school can grow, harvest and cook their own crops. The outdoor learning theme is woven through the whole curriculum, for all year groups, so all our children enjoy the experience of loving to learn about the world around them. This has been developed into the Sheriffhales 6 outdoor curriculum, covering shelter-building, navigation skills, fire, tools, gardening and knots!

Sheriffhales has children from age 3 – 11, mostly from Sheriffhales and Shifnal. The preschool meets a need in the community for high quality, reliable Early Years provision, allowing many more families to access work knowing their children are in the very best professional care. We have also expanded our before and after school care, which also provides important support to many families.

The word is loudly out about our school, and our numbers have grown from 66 in September 2022, to 96 today: we are a thriving school with a great reputation, wonderful children and staff team and hugely supportive parents, PTFA and governing body, all of which helps to enhance the reputation of the beautiful village to which we are so proud to belong.

Justine Keeling-Paglia
Headteacher

Further information about Sheriffhales Primary School and Preschool can be found on our new website www.sheriffhaleschool.org or by contacting the school office.

Co-op Local Community Fund

The Co-op Local Community Fund supports projects in Co-op members' communities that help to create Sustainable Future for People and the Planet (the themes for the 2024 application window). There is a total of £5 million for Co-op communities across the UK with £6,000 to share between three local causes in each community.

Funding is determined by Co-op community members who vote on the project they wish to support in their local community. The more Co-op members that support the project and shop at Co-op, the more money groups will receive. Successful groups will receive a minimum of £1,000 to support their projects. Not-for-profit groups that are registered or based in the UK with their own bank account can apply if their project supports the 2024 themes of:

People – project should enable people to play a part in their community's future by:

- Supporting young people to fulfil their potential.
- Helping older people feel connected
- Improving **people's mental wellbeing**

Planet - projects that help to protect the planet by:

- Tackling climate change
- Reducing waste and resource use
- Protecting nature

Applicants will need to provide a Co-op membership number for one of the people making the application. Non-members can join online.

The Local Community Fund is now closed and is no longer seeking new applications for 2024. In the past applications have opened in Spring /Summer.

More information: <https://www.coop.co.uk/LCF>

To apply to Co-op's Local Community Fund, at least one of the primary contacts making the Application, must be a Co-op Member. The Primary contact must provide a valid Co-op Membership number confirming they are a member of the Co-operative Group Limited. Any other group that can prove they are not-for-profit.

Village Hall Committee overview – Caroline Smith

The village hall continues to provide the Parish with a venue which can be adapted to suit a wide variety of requirements, the Committee have worked hard to promote the hall as a facility within and beyond the Parish. Our new website is a modern interface which has helped to increase bookings for parties and family events. We have also been pleased to widen our regular hire groups over the past year. We now have yoga sessions twice a week, a monthly Sewing Bee group and most recently Mindfulness sessions, in addition to longstanding regular users such as the W.I, Bowling Club and Flower Club. Dialogue with the school has enabled them to use their allocated hours more effectively to accommodate their Breakfast and After School Clubs.

In order to provide an attractive venue for hirers, the Committee has focused on maintenance issues this year. A new lighting system has replaced the original which had become unreliable. The water heater has been replaced and the dishwasher mended. A cleaner has been employed for two hours per week to help us ensure that high standards of cleanliness are maintained. Outside some trees have been cut down and shrubs pruned. Lights alongside the steps have been mended.

The Committee sees the hall as an important part of the Parish. A place where the community can come together for events such as last year's D-Day commemorative afternoon tea and a venue for people to take part in activities. We hope that in the coming year its use will continue to grow. If anyone is interested in joining the Committee to actively help to maintain, promote and widen the use of the village hall for the benefit of the community please contact us to find out more.

Sheriffhales Community Energy Solar Project

Some things you may not know about YOUR Sheriffhales Community Energy Solar Project

- Find out more about the project from our website www.sheriffhales.energy
- The project was brought into 100% Community ownership in October 2022 with a loan from Triodos Green Bank and a Bond offer that was taken up by 198 individuals.
- It is a 3.2MW project and has a Feed in Tariff until 2040 it was connected to the grid in 2016 and went through several corporate part ownerships and funding iterations before it was purchased outright by the Community. It bears the financial burdens of these iterations.
- The project receives revenue streams from the Feed In Tariff, REGOs and a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). For the financial year ending December 2024, the unaudited revenue is approximately £525,000. The Feed in Tariff increases by an agreed inflation percentage each year. The PPA is open market negotiation on current rates and usually sold forward for a 2-to5-year cycle.
- When it was connected in 2016 as one of two Lightsource projects that were connected to the grid at that time in the Parish. The 5MW project remains in the ownership of Lightsource.
- The Community Project is sited on rented Land from a local farmer in Sheriffhales, it connects to the grid close to Shifnal services. Over a mile away from the site.

- The Project is governed on behalf of the Community by an asset locked Community Benefit Society which has a Board of Directors who currently consist of the following volunteers:

Peter Bonsall, Georgina Bale, Peter Frith, Justine Keeling-Paglia, Christopher Andrew, Richard Maddocks and Teresa Clarke
- All aspects of day-to-day management of the Asset is managed by Communities for Renewables. A Company based in Cornwall who manage a number of Community Solar projects around the Country. Visit their site to find out more at www.cfric.co.uk.
- The Operation and Maintenance of the Solar project is managed by BP Lightsource. They make sure that the Solar Project is running as it should and producing power ready for selling to the grid and receiving FIT payments. Find out more about them at: <https://lightsourcebp.com/uk/partner-with-us/operations-and-maintenance/>
- Our fundraise in 2022 was one of the first Community Solar Farm fund raises in the Country and has been featured as an exemplar project in The Sunday Times and on BBC TV as well as numerous other press forums.

What has the Solar Project contributed to YOUR community so far?

Providing sufficient energy is generated to pay off the loan, our obligations to bond holders and cover ongoing maintenance costs, each year £20,000 is allocated to community projects for the life of the project.

Over £1,000,000 is expected to be generated for the Parish over the life of the project. Most being generated in the latter years after debt is paid down.

So far, the Solar Project has invested **£172,095** into community projects. These include:

- **£55,060** has been granted to the **Village Hall** towards the extension and exterior lighting.
- **£24,187** has been granted to **St Marys Church** in Sherifffhales for lighting and other works including funding to investigate the current need for refurbishment.
- **£24,000** approx. was paid directly to the **Parish Council** as Community Benefit when the two projects were connected in 2015 and 2016. This has been utilised to fund the defibrillator, benches on the playing field, improving the path to the church, village notice boards and gateway markers, the community orchard and funding towards the Village Hall and new playground equipment.
- **£10,000** has been paid to **Marches Energy Agency to operate and distribute grants to parishioners facing fuel poverty** – further information, including eligibility can be found on our website [Winter Energy Fund | Sherifffhales Community Energy - Solar Farm](#)
- **£17,293** has been granted to **Sherifffhales Primary School** for software and training during COVID and other projects.
- **£9,031** was spent on **feeding the Parish during COVID**.
- **£6,383** has been ringfenced as contribution to the Parish Council to install new play equipment this year.
- **£4,761** was granted to provide **Oak Benches around the Parish**.
- **£4,500** was granted to Sherifffhales Primary School PTFA for a new electric Lawnmower for school to help maintain the grounds in a cost effective and environmental way.
- **£4,205** was granted to giving free **LED lightbulbs to the Parish**.
- **£4,000** is ringfenced for Grant Applications for individuals within the Parish wishing to apply for **financial support towards further education or apprenticeships – we are open to applications!**
- **£2,975** was spent on **subsidised Taxis for the use of those Parishioners in need** of transport.
- **£2,000** was granted to the **Church Choir** for equipment and services.
- **£1,700** has been granted to the **Parish Magazine** over the last three years to help with production and printing costs.
- **£1,000** was granted towards the **Village Christmas Lights** in 2023.
- **£1,000** funding towards the gig held in **St Marys Church to support fundraising for refurbishment**.

After all the above, the Project has current reserves around £40,000 available for allocation to community projects.

What plans do we have for the future?

We are still exploring the possibility of siting an EV Charging Station and Community Shop Retail Unit within the Parish.

Go to www.sheriffhales.energy to find out more. We are always looking for new projects.

Sheriffhales Parish Magazine

The parish magazine began in 1983 as a simple black and white typed newsletter written by Siss and Arthur Hawkins, although the front copy of that magazine, reprinted part of an earlier magazine from 1904 so this is clearly a much older village heritage.

Since then, several editing teams have produced the magazine each making their changes over the years. For the last 7 years, the magazine has been edited by Barbara Barlow who produced her last issue in December 2024. This year the magazine has been taken over by Pippa Hodgetts and Julia Gough who launched a new look magazine in late February with the first issue covering March and April 2025. We are delighted to continue the tradition and add our own ideas to the publication.

The new magazine will be published bimonthly but will have more pages and content. To enable us to publish news and events between magazine dates, we have also set up a new Parish News WhatsApp group. Only admins will be able to post on this so that people can find articles quickly. So far over a 100 people have signed up to the new group.

We are trying to recruit new contributors to provide articles on local and seasonal topics as well as explore the history of the village and its older properties. We can offer them help in editing if they don't feel confident in producing ready to publish copy.

The parish magazine receives reports and news of events from the parish council, church, village hall committee and school as well as parish groups and clubs. We hope we can start to become a central communication point between all these groups to help different organisations to work more effectively together.

75 people still receive a paper copy of the magazine. 17 have recently asked to switch to an e-mail copy taking the total number of e-mailed copies to 156 and the total distribution list to 231. We continue to encourage people to receive the magazine digitally where able to for environmental reasons and to fully appreciate the quality of the photographs.

The magazine continues to be funded by advertising space sold and by a donation from The Community Energy Fund.

St Mary's Playgroup, Sheriffhales

St Mary's Playgroup was set up in 2022 when The Montessori Preschool at the Village Hall closed, with the idea to enable the children who attended this setting to continue to meet each other and socialise. Initially it ran in the afternoon on a Thursday for children and their parents or carers in the Beasley room at church. There was no charge to attend the group, and the running of it was and continues to be voluntary. The aim was to benefit the community and so Rev. Chris allows us to run it from the building at no cost.

We have always been a small group, but we now average four to five children a session. We continue to meet at church but now on a Friday morning between 9 and 11am. This has allowed some mums who drop off older children at school, to then attend with younger siblings. We have a growing group of young toddlers who love to natter to each other at the tables! We also have a few children who are looking to attend Sheriffhales Primary School in future years.

Activities are set up with a theme in mind, normally based around a special day or time of year i.e. Valentine's Day. We are not a religious group but will on occasion do activities based loosely around religion. We like to decorate the church too when we have made things for a certain event that will be celebrated. We often have singing or story time and endless tea, coffee and snacks for all!

As a group, we welcome anyone who would like to pop in for a chat, with child or without!

Sheriffhales Community Café

The Community Café was originally started by members of St Mary's Church in 2013 to provide an opportunity for the community to meet up on a Friday afternoon, as well as raise money for church funds. It was very popular with parents, grandparents and pupils of Sheriffhales Primary School who would run across at home time and form a queue for the pick and mix tuck shop.

Sadly, the Covid crisis forced the café to close, but our group of volunteers were delighted to reopen the café in term time in November 2022.

It remains very popular, offering the village and school an opportunity to celebrate the end of a busy week, catch up on news and enjoy a cuppa and delicious homemade cake. The excitement of the children carefully choosing their sweets at tuck shop, and spending that hard earned pocket money is joyful!

We are so grateful for the fantastic dedicated home bakers who give their time and ingredients to make sumptuous cakes, and serve delicious tea and coffee. We would love to have more volunteers to swell the team, to bake or to serve, to help on the very popular tuck shop, or to help clear away. If you are able to offer support so that we can share the tasks, and ensure that we can have a monthly rota rather than asking volunteers to help every week - it will help the wonderful Community Café to be sustainable, and continue to welcome and provide that Friday feeling - we all need cake!

3. To confirm the Minutes of the Sheriffhales Annual Parish Meeting held on 12th March 2024

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2024, having been circulated in advance of the current meeting, were approved and signed as a true record of the proceedings at that meeting.

4. Matters Arising from the minutes

There were no Matters arising from the previous meetings.

5. Parish Council Report

Chairman Cllr J Horne presented the Community Hero Award was presented to Jenny Mahoney, and everyone thanked her for all her work for Sheriffhales.

He presented the following report:-

Last year the Annual Parish meeting was held on the 12th March 2024, I was again voted Chair with Cllr Pippa Hodgetts as Vice Chair.

Further fruit trees have been planted in the orchard and gateway markers have been erected at the north and south entrances to the village.

The question of the need for a neighbourhood plan was brought to the Parish and the parish Council would like to thank all the volunteers that hand delivered the questionnaires and it was decided not to proceed.

The Speedwatch Group sessions continue to help bring down the speeds through the village. Once recent survey counted 300 vehicles in 45 minutes on the B4379 passing through the village which highlights the facts the the road is used as a cut through. Several people have undertaken the training sessions, with 5 more about to start theirs. In one session (an hour long) there were 14 vehicles caught speeding, with the fastest in a 30mph zone being 49mph, and they will have received a Police visit.

The playing field in May was left as "No Mow May", this was very well received by the public. Several residents asked if the cut paths could remain through the Summer. This was agreed and reviewed before the cut in the Autumn and the Council will be looking at planting wild flower areas.

For the D Day celebrations a service was held in St Andrews Church Shifnal and a rather splendid afternoon tea was held in the village hall, thank you again to all those that made this possible baking amazing cakes and making sandwiches. A flag pole and flag was provided by the Parish Council. Volunteers made 30+ silent soldier silhouettes that were erected around the village.

In June I attended the Celebrating Sheriffhales Service which was a lovely event in celebration of the village and parish and I spoke about a very successful year in the life of the Parish Council and of our plans for the coming year.

Footpath diversion / closure at Western Heath was supported by the Parish Council, to enable the path to be moved to a farm lane as opposed to a yard.

Remembrance Day in Sheriffhales, there was the annual church service and a wreath laid at the War Memorial.

The Parish Council will investigate starting the process of a 40mph speed limit at Heath Hill which is an area of concern re speeding as well as the noticeable increase in traffic on the B4379.

Thanks to Cllr Pippa Hodgetts liaising with Inspector Kelly, we have secured 50% funding of a SID sign, which can be used around the Parish once sites are sourced for the posts.

The Precept has not been increased for 7 years and the parish reserves have been depleted so this year, regrettably, the Precept will be increasing slightly, equating to £2 per year for a Band D property. The reason behind the increase is that Shropshire Council has halved the Environmental Maintenance Grant they give to the Parish which is used for work around the Parish, like cutting verges, over growth around signs, cutting grass area at Heath Hill, etc. This work previously was undertaken directly by Shropshire Council, but due to cuts in services this is now passed directly to the Parish with little financial contribution. As a Council we would prefer to keep the verges and areas that were the responsibility of Shropshire Council properly maintained, and enables us to see that areas such as Heath Hill are more regularly cut.

In January a new councillor Paul Bradburn joined the Parish Council, we welcome him and thank him for his support to the Community.

At the meeting prior to this one this evening, the Parish Council agreed the quote for the new play equipment, that will be erected when the weather improves. The cost is £27,900 and copies of the new site plan were shared. This has been funded by several grant streams, Parish reserves and CIL funds. He thanked everyone involved in getting this project to fruition.

He reported the change in electoral boundaries; previously we were under Shifnal, we are now Shifnal Rural this will be a brand new Unitary Council area, which will include Sheriffhales, Tong, Kemberton, Beckbury and Sutton Maddock. Shifnal North replaces the area that previously included Sheriffhales which has been covered by Cllr K Turley for several years, he will re-stand for this new area of Shifnal. Cllr J Horne will be applying to stand for the new unitary seat that covers Sheriffhales.

6. Questions arising from the public relevant to the reports or with regards to the parish.

It was noted that the members using the library van each week, have increased and this needs to keep going to keep the service running.

The issue of the school drive is in a bad state and needs to be repaired as someone has had a fall. The ownership of the driveway is owned by Shropshire County Council, the car park is owned by the Church and possibly the Parish Council. A member of the public asked if a member of the community could fill in the holes, but this needs to be filled in correctly. A member of the community reported this to Shropshire Council and no action was taken. The Clerk will report this to Shropshire Council and copy in Graham Downs.

The fly tipping on Marsh Lane has been removed by Shropshire Council.

Any issues should be reported directly to Shropshire Council app, and the more complaints the better to highlight the issues. This will go in the Parish Magazine.

On the 15th March it is a significant day in this village, 5 years ago, Cllr Pippa Hodgetts started the Village Whatsapp Group, and everyone thanked her for starting this group.

7. Close

The Chairman thanked the members of the Parish Council and the public for attending the meeting. Meeting closed at 8.30pm.