

# Acton Burnell, Frodesley, Pitchford, Ruckley & Langley Parish Council

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Tuesday 19 May 2026 at 7.30pm

Pitchford Village Hall

### MINUTES

#### 1. Chairman's Welcome

Councillor John Long, outgoing Chairman of the Parish Council, chaired the meeting. He welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and explained that Cllr Carmen Culliss is the new Chair of the Parish Council from May 2026.

#### 2. Minutes of the Previous Parish Meeting:

- a. The minutes of the meeting on 20 May 2025 were accepted as an accurate record with two requested amendments from Concord College:
  - "Dr Michael Truss, Principal of Concord College, presented"
  - "Dr Truss said that one possibility could be to move students"
- b. There were no further matters arising from the previous meeting.

#### 3. West Mercia Police Report

PC Phil Nock, Rural Crime Officer, and PC Rich Walters from the Safer Neighbourhood team attended the meeting.

PC Nock explained that crime is not rife in the Parish, but that hare coursing is a seasonal crime.

The force does not have enough officers and is seeking volunteers to be Special Constables. Fly-tipping is also an issue in rural Shropshire, this can be reported to Shropshire Council via [fixmystreet](#). PC Nock recommends joining local WhatsApp groups to report and share information on any suspicious activity.

PC Walters highlighted that the SNTs often run local surgeries and recommended signing up to Neighbourhood Matters to receive up to date information about local policing. He regularly operates the force's TrueCam speed enforcement camera which is effective for slowing down traffic in specific areas.

Other issues to be aware of include:

- Teenagers shooting birds with catapults, this is illegal
- Cannabis dumps – please report anything suspicious to the police
- There is an increasing trend of containers being broken into

PC Nock/Graham Donaldson can provide advice on keeping outbuildings secure and placing trackers on vehicles.

#### 4. Chairman's Annual Report

Cllr Long reported on the work of the Parish Council during 2025/26. This is presented in the attached report, [Appendix 1](#).

#### 5. Report of Parish Council Accounts

Anna Morris, Parish Clerk outlined the Parish Council's accounts for April 2025 – March 2026. This is presented in the attached report, [Appendix 2](#).

#### 6. Shropshire Councillor's Report

Cllr Chris Naylor gave an update on the work of Shropshire Council (SC) during 2025/26. This is presented in the attached report, [Appendix 3](#). In addition, he outlined the new pilot scheme taking place in Church Preen which enables local volunteers to fill small potholes. Cllr Long said the Parish Council would monitor how this scheme goes before considering if it would be suitable for our Parish. Cllr Naylor was asked about the inefficient use of SC resources with regard to repairing potholes. **Action: Cllr Naylor to invite Cllr David Vasmer to a future PC meeting to address this issue.**

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## 7. Concord College Report

Dr Michael Truss, Principal of Concord College and Matthew Hodge, the bursar, attended the meeting. Dr Truss explained that the national landscape for independent schools is worsening with lots of schools closing, merging or being taken over by for profit companies. Fortunately Concord College is doing well and is not at risk of this. It is expected to remain stable at 540-550 pupils. For the third year running the College has been named one of the top 100 independent schools in the world and the nationalities of its students is becoming increasingly diverse. The College enjoyed hosting the Lunar New Year celebrations and is keen to invite locals to more school plays and concerts in the future.

Mr Hodge provided an update on the building projects currently being undertaken at the College. Two big building projects, the new boarding house, Lawley House, and the sports hall have taken longer than expected but are due to be complete in August 2026. There are no immediate plans for any more development once these are complete. Students should be moving to Lawley House in September and 3 existing boarding houses in the village will no longer be occupied by students. The Trustees have not yet decided what will happen to these buildings. There is currently no plan to remove the lease from the Post Office which is occupied on a rolling one year contract basis.

## 8. Pitchford Village Hall Report

Mike Price, Chairman of the Village Hall Committee, gave an update on the Village Hall. This year the Village Hall is celebrating its centenary. There will be an exhibition of the history of the four parishes and a party on 11 December 2026 which is open to everyone in the parish.

The Village Hall committee is reasonably financially stable. They are looking to refurbish the toilet area. The Committee is considering running more live events next year to increase use of the village hall; numbers attending current regular events are decreasing. The Committee is hoping to add 4 new members to replace 3 members who are standing down this year. Particularly, they are looking for an accountant to volunteer to be the treasurer.

## 9. 'Village Views' Report

Chris Harrison, Editor, was unable to attend but provided the attached report, [Appendix 4](#).

## 10. Parish Charity - Godolphin Edwards Trust

Nikki Winmill, Programme Officer for the Community Foundation for Staffordshire and Shropshire provided a report on the parish charity which the foundation manages. It is an endowment fund with the interest awarded to the community. The amount available annually varies depending on interest rates but there will always be funds available. Grants are available to individuals up to £500 and community organisations up to £2,000. Applications are usually considered twice yearly but the trustees will also consider time-sensitive applications. In 2025/26 the trust gave out £1,500. **Action: Clerk to ask Village Views to advertise charity again**

## 11. Any Other Business

None.

## 12. Date & Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in May 2027. The date will be published nearer the time.

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## Appendix 1

### PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2026

#### **Meetings:**

As usual, the statutory six PC meetings were held during the year from May 25 onwards with no requirements for any Extraordinary Meetings.

#### **Finances:**

The finances of the PC remain healthy with a small surplus being accrued during the year in the General Reserve Fund. The balance is within the limits recommended by the local government advisory bodies.

The income from the 'Lightsource' solar panel farm continues to accrue to the Community Benefit account, which now stands at over £100k. This is a restricted and ring-fenced account from which payments can only be made to deserving local causes and bodies (not individuals) such as funding four defibrillators in each of the constituent elements of the parish, to repairs, wifi etc. to Pitchford Village Hall and to pay for the publication of the quarterly 'Village Views'.

The longer term use of this sizeable amount is open to discussion, but might for instance provide seed funding for either a new Community Shop, if and when the current shop and Post Office in Acton Burnell closes or for a new Village Hall, possibly in Acton Burnell, should the current one in Pitchford be forced to close when its lease expires in a few years' time.

The PC also holds Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies, which derive from payments made to the County Council and in part passed on to the PV by developers of new buildings. In the past this has been used for projects such as a new stretch of pavement in Acton Burnell or refurbishing the phone boxes in Acton Burnell and Pitchford, which are owned and insured by the PC.

#### **Administration:**

The PC is extremely fortunate in having in Anna Morris a well-qualified and highly competent Parish Clerk. Without her, the task of running the PC would be far harder, if not impossible, for all the Councillors, but especially for the Chairman.

However, increasing salary levels and NI costs mean that a very large proportion c80% of the annual precept levied by the PC through residents' Council Tax bills goes towards paying Anna's salary etc.

In large part, this is because we are what is known as a 'micro-council' ie we have a precept of under £10,000 pa (£7,240 in FY 25/26) and yet we have to undertake exactly the same amount of administration and comply with precisely the same rules, regulations and reporting cycles as a major Town Council. As an example, we are required to have at least 25 separate Policies and Procedures, all of which have to be kept up to date and reviewed by the Clerk and then formally approved annually by the PC at meetings. Whilst some of these policies are relatively short, others extend to over 40 pages.

Accordingly, the time has got to come soon when the local PC as we know it, that has existed for decades if not centuries, will have to combine with other PCs in order to save costs. This will undoubtedly ensure economies of scale, but will also mean that the local voice of the people will be muted. Assuming of course that this 'voice' exists because, in an ever changing world, village life has been diluted and even

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getting people to volunteer to be on the PC has become an extremely difficult, if not impossible, task. It is perhaps noteworthy that there has not been the requirement for an election of a Councillor since I was elected in 2012! All other new arrivals on the Council since have been by co-option.

I should emphasize that there are currently no plans to merge with neighbouring PCs. This is simply something that I consider is inevitable and certainly more cost efficient in the short to medium term.

## **Potholes:**

The major topic of the year has of course been the dreaded and at times extremely dangerous potholes. The PC along with local residents has complained vociferously and regularly about the deteriorating state of the roads. Many drivers have lost tyres or even broken wheels and the claims procedure instituted by Shropshire Council is not exactly user friendly! Letters have been written with ever increasing frustration, the website 'FixmyStreet' has been updated virtually weekly and the local County Councillor has had his ear bent at every PC meeting.

As residents will have seen, in the last month several of the major craters have been repaired and for this we are very grateful. However, it must be noted that there are still many potholes that have not been filled, often in close proximity to those that have been and this is extremely annoying because it is a very short-sighted approach by Shropshire Council to the problem. Why send out a team of men twice, when one thorough review of the situation would result in a wholesale solution? Equally, some of the work that has been done has been poor and, in some cases, downright shoddy, so that the 'fill' will be removed at the next heavy rainfall or during the next winter season.

This short-termism by Shropshire Council and its contractors is counterproductive and financially wasteful as well as being irritating for local residents.

## **Conclusion:**

I hand over the Chairmanship to Carmen Culliss on 12 May and look forward to enjoying my time on the 'back-benches'. However, I along with several others Councillors will be standing down from the PC at the time of the next elections in May 2029, so if anyone wants to volunteer to step up, now is the time to start thinking about it!

## **Questions?**

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## Appendix 2

### Acton Burnell Frodesley Pitchford Ruckley & Langley Parish Council Financial Report for 2025/26

The Council received a precept of £7,240 from Shropshire Council to enable it to fulfil its statutory obligations.

General Parish Council expenditure, as shown in the year end accounts, was £8,944.88 (total expenditure including VAT, grants and restricted funds was £11,654.74).

Putting aside restricted grants and funds, with the amount received in interest and VAT and NI refunds, the Council spent £378.74 less than its income for the year.

At the close of the financial year 2025/26 the Parish Council held unrestricted general reserves of £5,417.68. This figure is within the recommended reserve for a Parish Council.

The Council also held restricted funds of £1,460.45 CIL Neighbourhood funding and £108,901.41 Lightsource Community Benefit Funding. Therefore, the total amount held by the Parish Council at year end 2025/26 was £115,779.54.

#### **CIL Neighbourhood Fund**

The Council did not receive any additional CIL funding in 2025/26. The Council spent £996 from this fund in 2025/26 on repainting the phone boxes in Acton Burnell and Pitchford. This leaves £1,460.45 unallocated funds. However, the Council has been informed that it will receive an additional £12,656.75 in 2026/27.

#### **Lightsource Community Benefit Fund**

The Parish Council received £15,439.22 as a Community Benefit payment from Lightsource for the solar parks within part of the parish.

This money is held in a separate account as a Community Fund and is used to fund community projects. During 2025/26 the fund contributed a total of £859.28 in grants to the Village Views newsletter and Pitchford Village Hall broadband, and £25 to mow Roman Road, in addition to spending £523 on the parish's defibrillators.

#### **Governance**

The Parish Council reviewed its Financial and Risk Assessment documents in May 2025 and these will be reviewed again and updated in May 2026. The Council was audited by an internal auditor in April 2026 and was found to have met all its financial control requirements. The Council has in all aspects of its financial dealings adhered to strict guidelines ensuring that all decisions represent best value for money for the community.

Anna Morris, Clerk & RFO  
2 May 2026

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## Appendix 3

Annual Report to Annual Parish Meeting 19 May 2026 – Shropshire Council

### Local work

I've been delighted to get to know the 5 parishes served by this parish council, one of my 5 parish councils across the Burnell division which stretches from Hughley to Castle Pulverbatch. I've attended almost all the parish meetings over the past year and offered to help where I can.

The key ongoing issue has of course been potholes, sadly, and I've been pushing for action. One problem is that there are only two technicians covering the central Shropshire area, with one post vacant – its up to them to specify works and chase contractors. Another is that the ongoing overall contract with Keir is not delivering as it should (some of you may have heard about recent failure to empty litter bins, that's entirely down to Keir), that continues to March 2027 and is currently under review. The third is that the Council traditionally just hasn't been allocating enough money to its 3200 miles of road, but our new Cabinet Member David Vasmer has won a Highways budget increase from £40m in 2025/26 to £75m in 2026/27, partly funded through extra funding we have won from central government.

However I'm glad to say we have made a bit of progress recently, with some of the major potholes from Pitchford to Acton Burnell filled, and I'm told, some work to clear drains and culverts on the lower end of Frodesley Lane. I'll continue to fight for more work locally, particularly on the failed utility trench below Frodesley village, and I hope my 'promotion' in the Council will give me more clout. With the rally coming through in the autumn, I'm hoping we might use that to press for repairs to a couple of very bad patches near Causewaywood and up to Chatwall (not your parish I know!).

Key meetings and discussions over the past year include:

- Dr Michael Truss principal of Concord College and Cabinet Member Planning
- Chris Knowles and Cabinet Member Flooding re drainage problems on Frodesley Lane and by Longnor crossroads
- Wheels of Old Ltd in Frodesley re pothole problems locally and inability to offer test drives to customers
- Graham and Kath Davies regarding local community issues
- James Nason about Pitchford Hall and future plans
- Ruckley residents about ongoing flood issues

I remain of course happy to be invited to events and to meet with residents about issues of concern.

### Council news

I know it's requested this report focus on local issues, but if I may a couple of Council points:

#### 1. Top staff changes

In order to move the Council forward, and find a way through the very difficult financial position, the new administration has said goodbye to Chief Executive, Chief Legal Officer, Chief Finance Officer. All these posts are now filled, and I particularly welcome Duncan Whitfield as the new Finance Lead, who I'll be working with in my new role as Chair of Finance Scrutiny

#### 2. Cabinet changes

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To better reflect our concerns about local community, we've just created a new Cabinet post 'Communities and Environment'. This will cover Libraries, Youth Services, Water Flooding and...Town and Parish Councils. I've already asked Cllr Sarah Marston, the new Cabinet Member, to visit us here. (I was grateful for John Long's giving evidence to one of our recent Scrutiny meetings recently, and I've also just suggested we start inviting parishes in to present to our Full Council.)

### 3. Finances

Meanwhile as is well known the Council's financial position remains very difficult, and our top priority has to be to get the Council's finances back on a firm footing.

*Cllr Chris Naylor, Burnell - [chris.naylor@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:chris.naylor@shropshire.gov.uk)*

DRAFT

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## Appendix 4

### VILLAGE VIEWS ANNUAL REPORT 2026

We are happy to report that Village Views continues to attract local advertisers (largely thanks to the work of Rachel Johnson). We have been slowly running down our funds over the last 18 months, which meant that the recent grant of £500 from Lightsource was the first grant we have requested since September 2024 (when we received a grant of £250).

Paul has continued to handle the layout of Village Views, and is happy to carry on doing so, unless someone else steps up to take on the role.

John Glover is still masterminding the distribution of copies to all households in the community, using a network of hard-working and highly valued volunteers. We would like to thank Carmen Cullis, Gareth Ball, Katie Bell (aided by Rachel Johnson), Jo Davies and Ginny Rumball. John Long has kindly been delivering in Acton Piggott and Evenwood, but we would very much like to find a volunteer to handle this on a more permanent basis. New pairs of hands are always welcome! If anyone would like to help out with this, please email [villageviews@hotmail.com](mailto:villageviews@hotmail.com), or have a word with John Glover.

Due to time pressures, we did not issue an update to the Directory in 2025, but we were very happy to welcome a new volunteer, Ian Southworth, who has agreed to have a go at revising the Directory, hopefully ready for publication in August this year.

Looking ahead, we have several ideas in the pipeline for new features in Village Views, but we are always keen to hear suggestions for interesting items, and would be very happy to hear from anyone who would like to write a regular (or occasional) column. We'd also be very pleased to feature snaps by local photographers. This year we will be collaborating with the Pitchford Village Hall Centenary Club to produce a commemorative edition of Village Views, which will hopefully draw together many of the fascinating stories of Pitchford's history and will be a tribute to the work which the Club has been doing to mark 100 years of Pitchford Village Hall being at the heart of the local community.

I am still planning to stand down in the next year or two, and hope that someone will volunteer to take on the role, and continue to develop Village Views for the community.

Christine Harrison  
Editor  
Village Views