

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

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Tuesday 20 May 2025 at 7.30pm  
Pitchford Village Hall

### MINUTES

#### 1. Welcome

Councillor John Long, Chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and passed responsibility for chairing the meeting to former Chairman Paul Harrison.

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

- a. The minutes of the meeting on 16 May 2024 were accepted as an accurate record with one requested amendment from Concord College re safe driving.
- b. There were no further matters arising from the previous meeting.

#### 3. West Mercia Police Report

PCSO Stuart Roberts presented the report. The Parish is a very low crime area. There have been no reports of any significant crimes over the past year. 12 months ago a large crime gang who perpetrated thefts of farm equipment were imprisoned, two members are due to be released soon and will be closely monitored by the police.

#### 4. Report of Parish Council Accounts

Anna Morris, Parish Clerk outlined the Parish Council's accounts for April 2024 – March 2025. These are presented in the attached report, Appendix 1.

#### 5. Chairman's Annual Report

Cllr Harrison reported on the work of the Parish Council during 2024/25. These are presented in the attached report, Appendix 2.

#### 6. Shropshire Councillor's Report

Cllr Chris Naylor was unable to attend the meeting. He has provided a report attached, Appendix 3.

#### 7. Concord College Report

Dr Michael Truss, Principal of Concord College, presented the report. It is currently a difficult time for the independent sector with the introduction of VAT on fees. The College is doing well under difficult circumstances and mitigated this issue by not passing on the full 20% increase to parents. Nationally, applications from international students are down by 25%, but Concord College's applications are steady. However the College is unlikely to expand over the next few years. The College is rated as one of the top 100 fee paying schools in the world.

There are currently two significant building projects underway; a new boarding house and rebuilding the sports hall. These are due to be complete by May 2026.

A second phase of building work, another boarding house and changes to dining facilities, is currently on hold. It has not been signed off by the board of trustees and is unlikely to start in the next 12 months.

The College hopes to do more events welcoming locals such as the fireworks for lunar New Year. Students continue to help in local primary schools.

The College is concerned about speeding and reminds parents on a regular basis to drive courteously.

The College has increased litter picking on the main road and entrance road.

Jeremy Lowe pointed out that he often sees construction vehicles heading towards the side gates and suggested erecting a "no construction traffic sign" at the end of the road. Dr Truss said they had put a sign on the white gates but would look into an additional sign.

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Dr Truss said that one possibility could be to move students from buildings in the village into new boarding houses on the campus; however the College does not yet have firm plans for what will happen to the vacated buildings. Some may be sold if change of use is possible.

## **8. Pitchford Village Hall Report**

Mike Price, Chairman of the Village Hall Committee presented the attached report, Appendix 4.

## **9. 'Village Views' Report**

Chris Harrison presented the attached report, Appendix 5.

## **10. Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust**

Trustee Charles Edwards gave a talk about The Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust which is related to the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, formerly the AONB. The Trust is separate from the National Landscapes, which has statutory duties. The Trust collects funds from local businesses, trusts and Parish Councils, usually around £15,000 per year, and gives the money out to community projects anywhere within the National Landscape boundary. These projects include educational programmes with children, monitoring numbers of species with declining numbers, training volunteers, and habitat protection. These are mostly simple, small scale, community projects which do not require a large amount of funds. The trust is asking Parish Councils to help identify potential projects and encourage people to apply to the trust for funding.

## **11. National Farmers Union (NFU) and local farming matters**

Jeremy Lowe, NFU county advisor for Staffordshire, gave a talk about the issues currently facing the farming community in Shropshire. Farming is the largest employer in the county, directly employing over 10,000 people. In 2023/24 it contributed over £10million to the county's economy.

There are currently a number of big issues impacting farmers:

- UK/EU trade deal – this will align farming standards with EU. Since Brexit the UK has been treated as a third country which has added massively to costs and caused delays for fresh produce. It is hoped that the deal will reduce these issues. The downside is that the UK will pay to sit at the table regarding standards but no longer gets a vote.
- Deal with USA – there has been a recent reciprocal deal regarding high quality beef. Beef from US will not be hormone treated. The deal has led to concerns that the bio-ethanol market, which is used to prevent volatility in the grain market by using surplus for fuel, may be impacted by imports.
- Inheritance tax – NFU opposes changes to inheritance tax for farms. There is concern that it will create hardship. It is already having a wider impact with a drop in orders for farm equipment. There are concerns that the Government policy is putting UK food security at risk, threatening jobs and will actually reduce tax income. The NFU has presented alternative suggestions to the Treasury but these have been rejected. The NFU predicts the policy will cut economic activity by £15 million by the end of this parliament and the Office for Budget Responsibility says the policy is unlikely to raise the £500 million predicted when implemented.
- Sustainable Farming Incentive – the previous government changed how farmers were paid; DeFRA is struggling to implement changes. The autumn budget capped payments at £7,200.
- Planning and Infrastructure Bill – This will reform the planning system and streamline planning applications. The downside for farmers is that it will remove “hope value” for land, so that it must be sold at its current value rather than its potential development value.
- Land Use Framework – The Government consulted on taking 9% of land out of food production for use in other environmental schemes.

## **12. Parish Charity - Godolphin Edwards Trust**

No one was free to attend the meeting; however Nikki Winmill provided the attached report, Appendix 6.

## **13. Rights of Way clearing**

The Parish Council is looking into the possibility of contracting work or finding volunteer groups to help clear sections of rights of way within the parish and is currently trying to put together a list of sections which need clearing to compile a scope of work. The Parish Council requests residents pass details of any routes which are impassable to the Parish Clerk – Anna Morris: 07842 324809, [clerk@actonburnellparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@actonburnellparishcouncil.org.uk)

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John Glover suggested the Longmynd and District Bridleway area could provide help organising a work parties to clear bridleways. **Action: J Glover to provide Clerk with Contact details.**

## 14. Upcoming local events

There are two upcoming events in the Parish:

- a. Acton Burnell Fete and Bash – Saturday 5 July 2025
- b. Frodesley Village Party – Saturday 12 July 2025

## 15. Any Other Business

Mike Price thanked the Parish Council for repainting the phone boxes.

Rob Morgan was thanked for sorting out the footpath and blocked drain at Home Farm.

Jeremy Lowe gave an update on the church – Reverend Geoff Garrett left 2 years ago, a replacement has not yet been found. The role will be advertised again in Autumn.

## 16. Date & Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in May 2026. The date will be published nearer the time.

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## Appendix 1

### Acton Burnell Frodesley Pitchford Ruckley & Langley Parish Council Financial Report for 2024/25

The Council received a precept of £6,598 from Shropshire Council to enable it to fulfil its statutory obligations.

General Parish Council expenditure, as shown in the year end accounts, was £7,616.28 (total expenditure including VAT, grants and restricted funds was £29,547.87).

Putting aside restricted grants and funds, with the amount received in interest and VAT and NI refunds, the Council spent £2,414.64 more than its income for the year. However, £1,986.29 of this is VAT which will be reclaimed in 2025/26. The Council had budgeted for expenditure to exceed income in order to reduce the levels of its general reserves.

At the close of the financial year 2024/25 the Parish Council held unrestricted general reserves of £5,038.94. This figure is within the recommended reserve for a Parish Council.

The Council also held restricted funds of £2,456.45 CIL Neighbourhood funding and £89,727.04 Lightsource Community Benefit Funding. Therefore, the total amount held by the Parish Council at year end 2024/25 was £97,222.43.

#### **CIL Neighbourhood Fund**

The Council did not receive any additional CIL funding in 2024/25. The Council spent £17,855.57 from this fund in 2024/25 on the replacement of Frodesley Bus Shelter, repairs to Pitchford Bus Shelter, and new speed management gateways for all villages in the Parish. A further £996 is allocated to be spent in 2025/26 on repainting the phone boxes in Acton Burnell and Pitchford. This leaves £1,460.45 unallocated funds.

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

The Parish Council received £15,896.81 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 2024/25 the fund contributed a total of £250 in grants to the Village Views newsletter, in addition to spending £518 on the parish's defibrillators and £1,250 on replacing the noticeboard at Ruckley.

#### **Governance**

The Parish Council reviewed its Financial and Risk Assessment documents in May 2024 and these will be reviewed again and updated in May 2025. The Council was audited by an internal auditor in April 2025 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  
8 May 2025

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## Appendix 2

### **Report for the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting from the Chairman of the Acton Burnell, Frodesley, Pitchford, Ruckley & Langley Parish Council**

This report covers activities over the last twelve months, during which six regular meetings were held along with one extraordinary meeting to discuss a planning application and two meetings of the Staff Appraisal Committee to review the performance of our Clerk.

A number of planning applications have been considered and comments made where appropriate. The most significant of these for the community has been the mobile phone mast which is to be installed at Frodesley Hall Farm, providing that sufficient service providers agree to use it. This should provide for much improved service across all three parishes.

Highways continue to require attention. Potholes present ongoing hazards and residents are encouraged to use the "Fix my Street" on-line system to report these and any other issues. Although the Parish Council submits regular reports, additional reports from residents will help to increase pressure to get the necessary work done.

Local footpaths and bridleways are also regularly on our agendas. An order for a new bridleway to cover the track from Pitchford to Golding has been issued following an independent report. However, this has been subject to appeal and is currently back with Shropshire Council awaiting submission to the Secretary of State. Issues relating to the bridleway via Bentley Ford Farm and footpath adjacent to the old Swan Inn at Frodesley are also currently with Shropshire Council. We are looking into improving footpaths through contract and volunteer grass cutting, etc.

Unfortunately, a general lack of funds at Shropshire Council is impacting heavily on services and the Council's ability to process issues and to respond to our requests.

Following an objection from one of the tenant farmers it would seem that a new footpath from Pitchford to Acton Burnell may not be feasible.

A number of projects have been completed during the year; a new bus shelter at Frodesley, refurbishment of the stonework on the Pitchford bus shelter, a replacement noticeboard at Ruckley, painting of the phone boxes at Acton Burnell and Pitchford (25/26 financial year) and, of course, installation of the village gateways at all three villages. The gateways were installed following complaints from residents regarding speeding through the villages and discussions with traffic engineers over many months. Unfortunately, associated works by Shropshire Council; formalisation of the 30mph speed limit for Frodesley village and the three approach roads along with better signing of the crossroads; painted 30mph roundels in the road to reinforce existing signage for all

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villages and removal of redundant signage has been severely delayed due to lack of funds. However, we are advised that this will definitely be proceeding over the next few months.

The Parish Council remains open to providing support to any new community-based groups, particularly if these can make use of Pitchford Village Hall where we have recently approved funding for installation of broadband.

Although not a Parish Council venture, the community Facebook page continues to provide a useful forum for general community issues, events information, offers of unwanted items, etc. The Parish Council is also using this to publish information on meetings, road closures and other items of interest.

The Parish Council continues to fund Village Views which is published quarterly. Thanks are extended to the volunteer group who work hard on this. The group also produces the Village Directory which is funded from local advertising in both publications.

The Parish Council remains in a strong financial position and is continuing to pursue items raised in the Community Led Plan for which funding is set aside.

On a sad note we have lost two residents over recent months who both contributed much to village life; Muriel Perks and John Leighton. Our thoughts go out to their families and loved ones.

Finally, my thanks go to our clerk, Anna Morris, and of course to my fellow councillors, particularly Carmen Cullis, our Vice Chairman and Tracy Johnson who has stood down following her work as a representative for Pitchford. I have stood down as Chairman and you will be in the capable hands of John Long for the forthcoming year.

Paul Harrison

18/5/2025

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## Appendix 3

### Shropshire Councillor's Report

#### The new Shropshire Council

As Parish Councillors and residents will be aware, the May 1st elections have resulted in a split of councillors as follows.

Conservatives - 7

Green - 4

Independent - 2

Labour - 4

Liberal Democrats - 42

Reform - 15

This gives the Lib Dems a clear majority. Interestingly 9 out of the 42 Lib Dems are from South Shropshire, and we also hold neighbouring Bayston Hill and Longden wards.

On May 22nd the first Full Council since the election was held, electing Heather Kidd, Councillor for Chirbury and Worthen, as Leader. Heather was Leader of South Shropshire District Council 2003-2009, and received an MBE for services to rural communities in 2023.

The new administration states its priorities as:

- "Fixing more potholes and improving the state of Shropshire's 3,200 miles of roads"
- "Improving customer service across the council, making it more responsive and easier to do business with"
- "Better and closer working with town and parish councils"

The new Cabinet is as follows:

- Leader – Cllr Heather Kidd
- Deputy Leader & Communities – Cllr Alex Wagner
- Finance – Cllr Roger Evans
- Social Care – Cllr Ruth Houghton
- Children & Education – Cllr Andy Hall
- Planning – Cllr David Walker
- Highways & Environment – Cllr David Vasmer
- Housing & Leisure – Cllr James Owen
- Transport & Economic Growth – Cllr Rob Wilson
- Health & Public Protection – Cllr Bernie Bentick

#### How I see my role

I'm of course grateful to be stepping into Dan Morris's shoes, and have been impressed by many positive comments about him on the doorstep. We haven't managed to get a handover yet but I'd be pleased to. In terms of my role I'd suggest that's along following lines - but please do correct me if I'm wrong:

- Represent local concerns to the Council
- Relay relevant Council policy developments to yourselves

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- Contribute advice, support, information where (if!) I have something useful to offer.

I've said I'll attend all parish council meetings, I'll be in every village once a week, I'll offer a public meeting in a different village each quarter. I'm not planning to offer surgeries, but I'll be happy to hear from residents by email or phone or indeed face-to-face.

I'll be getting simple A5 laminated fliers made up with my contact details: I hope to get these in village noticeboards across the division and I'd appreciate your help.

## **Food for thought**

Right now I'm trying to get a feel for local priorities across the division that I should seek to assist with if possible. Obviously potholes are a top priority, however the previous administration decided to extend the Kier highways contract for a further year (to March 2026) so the Council will have to work initially within the constraints of that. In addition, parishes and residents have already so far highlighted to me:

- Leebotwood pedestrian crossing - I've already met with the A49 Route Manager to discuss
- Quarry traffic by Conover School - I've discussed with residents and seen several worrying drop-off/pick-up near misses
- Re-opened Dorrington station - extremely unlikely unless there's new external funding! In which case I would get involved if useful.

Cllr Chris Naylor  
27 May 2025

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## Appendix 4

### Pitchford Village Hall Parish Council annual report

Over the year we have maintained the hall after some years of major investment to keep the facility open and useable. We are now looking to make improvements to the toilet area and external woodwork.

We have a small but very energetic committee who give up their free time, not just in managing the hall but by organising functions.

We are now on a sound financial footing after many years of struggle to meet our everyday running costs mainly through fundraising events, pub night, the 200 club and breakfast butties as bookings alone will not sustain the hall. We had a fantastic turnout of the VE day pub night where invited guests of a certain age were present and thoroughly enjoyed the evening. Our butty mornings are well supported and we try to use local British produce.

Our work to the toilets and woodwork will need to be part financed by any available grants which as you are aware are now very limited.

With energy costs having stabilised, our biggest outlay is insurance which currently costs over £1700 a year.

We now have broadband installed thanks in part to a generous grant from the light source fund.

As with many village halls, we need additional help as our committee is not getting any younger with the real possibility of the some posts being vacated in the near future.

We are currently promoting  
'Do One Thing'

This is where members of the community are asked to support our work without the need of joining the committee or attending meetings. A first class example of this is Rachel Johnson along with her family and friends, proving food for some of our events.

M J Price  
Chair  
20/5/2025

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## Appendix 5

### VILLAGE VIEWS ANNUAL REPORT 2025

It has been another successful year for Village Views. Thanks to the efforts of Rachel Johnson, we have been able to secure some new advertisers and also to retain many of our previous clients. Our income from advertising in Village Views over the last 12 months has amounted to £350, some of which was used to fund the 2024 Directory, with the remainder going towards printing costs for Village Views. This meant that for the second year running we have only needed to request a grant of £250 from the Parish Council, down from £500 in previous years.

I am pleased to say that our trusted band of volunteers continue to do a great job of delivering the printed copies of the magazine to all homes in our catchment area. Our thanks go to them, and also to John Glover for continuing to oversee and co-ordinate deliveries.

Sadly, we have had to say goodbye to Karen Fisher, who is off to lead a new life by the seaside. Karen's design skills and creativity have been responsible for giving Village Views its professional and lively appearance, and she will be a hard act to follow.

Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to find a replacement, and as a stop gap Paul and I will be taking over the design work, using PowerPoint. If anyone has experience of using PowerPoint and would like to get involved, please contact me. The Directory will be paused for this year while Paul and I get to grips with sorting out the design.

It has been 7 years since we re-launched Village Views following Beth Davies decision to step down. It has been an interesting job to take on, but looking ahead, I would like to pass on the role of editor to someone new in the next couple of years. I have other interests I'd like to give more time to, and a new person at the helm would hopefully come along with some new ideas and approaches. So if anyone fancies having a go, please get in touch with me!

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## Appendix 6

### Godolphin Edwards Grants Fund

The Godolphin Edwards Grants Fund exists to 'relieve either generally or individually persons resident in the parishes of Acton Burnell, Frodesley, Pitchford and Langley & Ruckley who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress by making grants of money or providing or paying for items, services or facilities calculated to reduce the need, hardship or distress of such persons'.

The Community Foundation for Staffordshire and Shropshire now manage and administrate the fund, with the original donor members still sitting on the panel, which allows them to still be involved with decisions on where the grant money is awarded to.

Grants are available to individuals (up to £500) and community groups (up to £2000) in the specified parishes.

Since the last meeting, there have been 2 funding rounds, with 4 grants being awarded.

To apply for the fund please visit

[www.shropshire.foundation](http://www.shropshire.foundation)

If you have any questions you can call Nikki at the Community Foundation on 01743 295900, or email [Nikki.winmill@shropshire.foundation](mailto:Nikki.winmill@shropshire.foundation)