

# CHILDS ERCALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Childs Ercall Parish Council held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 in the Jubilee Hall at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllr. Maddocks (Chair)  
Cllr. Clifton  
Cllr. Gary Barnes  
Cllr. R Crookes  
Cllr. R Gittins

Also, in attendance:

Mrs Barbara Pearce – Parish Clerk  
6 Members of the public

**73/2024 Welcome and Announcements**

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced clerk and councillors in attendance.

**74/2024 Apologies for absence**

Cllr. M Hatfield  
Cllr. J Letts  
Cllr. J Griffin

**RESOLVED:** To receive apologies of absence for this meeting.

**75/2024 To receive declarations of interest under consideration on this agenda in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 s32 and The Relevant Authorities (Shropshire Council disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.**

**Members are reminded that should you declare a pecuniary interest at a meeting, it is your responsibility to inform the Monitoring Officer.**

None.

**76/2024 Approval of the Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

**RESOLVED:** To accept the minutes of the CEPC APM on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 as being correct.

**77/2024 Matters arising from the 2023 Minutes.**

None.

**78/2024 Annual Report from Cllr. James Maddocks, Chairman of Childs Ercall Parish Council**

Written report provided by Cllr. James Maddocks:

Childs Ercall APM Chairman's Report

15<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Over the past twelve months the Parish Council has continued to provide its regular services, has progressed projects, implemented new projects for the coming financial year and overcome a number of challenges with the increase in the cost of utilities.

Firstly, as a Parish we should remember Cllr. Marcus Mackay who sadly passed away so suddenly at the end of February 2024. Marcus and his wife Christine have made a significant contribution to this Parish leaving a legacy that will remain for a generation. Marcus was heavily involved in securing the funding to replace the playground, and more recently he secured a new long term lease for the playing fields and would have pleased to see the introduction of the 7.5 tonnes weight limit making the village a safer place. Marcus also kindly helped many residents with issues that they encountered and assisted greatly with planning applications in the Parish. When you walk or pass through the village there are many reminders of their efforts, from his bulb planting along the nature trail and grass verges, tree and hedge planting, the new award-winning playground, the playing fields secured and the new weight limit. Many Cllrs, both past and present, attended the funeral hearing of the profound impact that he had on his family, friends and work colleagues. We were lucky that Christine and Marcus decided to choose CE as their home, and we will be working with Christine regarding a suitable recognition.

We have seen many changes to the make-up of the PC in the last 12 months. Cllr. Ann Cadden sadly retired as Chair in September 2023 following 4 years at the helm. Ann was originally part of the playground fund raising committee before moving across to the PC to see the successful delivery of the playground in 2020. Ann then took us through the difficult Covid years adapting to online meetings, continuing with the PC's efforts to bring in the weight limit, introduced the safety gate to the playing fields to improve access off the Eaton Road, saw the introduction of the new community website, nature trail, tree and hedge planting as part of the PC's biodiversity proposals. Ann left the PC in a strong position that I was lucky to benefit from when I took over in October. We wish Ann and her husband John a relaxing retirement.

In addition to Ann, Cllr. Fiona Norfolk and more recently Cllr. Jon London resigned from the PC during the year, and we thank them both for their efforts, and we look forward to working with the newer Cllrs. Janine Griffin and Richard Crookes moving forward, alongside existing Cllrs. Peter Clifton, Jane Letts, Martyn Hatfield and Gary Barnes.

Setting the budget for the next financial year was a challenging task, with increases in the cost of electricity for our streetlights and grass cutting costs, leading to a higher increase in our budget than we would have liked.

Moving forward, the PC will need to continue to increase our precept to reflect these continued cost increases, together the costs of repairing or renewing our various assets. We are now proposing to undertake a thorough review of these, in order that we can budget for their replacement, or repair, on an annual basis, as we may not receive larger CIL payments in the coming years (from new housing development).

We have recently agreed to repair the existing chain link fence along the southern boundary of the playing fields and step out the path along the playing fields which has become uneven. Many of our assets, fences, stone walls, paths are now over 40 years old and will need works done to them in due course, alongside the maintenance of the bus shelter, playground, streetlights and other assets.

Larger community assets such as St Michaels Church, the Village Club and the Jubilee Hall will also require renovation in the years to come, and we look forward to working the various organisations involved wherever we can.

Over the last year, the Council has continued carrying out our procedural duties and have been working hard considering planning applications for new development, with our former Chair instrumental in securing a planning gain payment for the PC once the Eaton Solar Farm development commences.

Cllr. Barnes has continued his good work with the Community Website promoting the best of our Parish whilst including our Agendas and Minutes, Policies a planning tracker and a village calendar

amongst other useful documents and links. More recently an Events Channel has been added advertising village events where residents can purchase tickets online.

We have relaunched our paper newsletter providing residents with updates on key projects and activities of the Council, alongside the relaunched community website and social media. Thanks to Cllr. Crookes we have added a new logo to support our communications.

We have continued our support of youth football with 4 teams playing on the playing fields over the winter, replenished by Miriams pop up café. With thanks also to Fiona Norfolk for overseeing the booking and payments.

We have introduced a Small Grants Policy to allow organisations in the Parish to apply for specific community projects and so far have made grants to the Village Club and Community Association.

We have encouraged Duke of Edinburgh students to assist with litter picking and local duties.

We have planted more trees as we look at our biodiversity commitments, along with replacing the less efficient sodium streetlight bulbs with LED bulbs.

We continue to maintain our assets with repairs proposed to the footpath on the playing field and southern boundary.

We have sourced a new landscaping contractor to cut our 5 acres of grass more regularly to make them more available for play. With the cutting season extended to include the early months of the football season. With thanks to Cllr. Hatfield and Cllr. Barnes.

We have replaced older park benches with picnic benches adding a bike rack on the green.

We have added a PROW plan to our website with thanks to Cllr. Letts.

And last but not least, we won the Jan Snell Award of a community project of high regard, which we won for the playground.

During the next year we will be looking to progress community projects such as wildflower planting along the nature trail and the community tree area, and highway verges, replace the remaining costly SON light bulbs with LED bulbs (which should reduce our electricity costs), look to continue to support local organisations by way of grants and donations, consider road safety initiatives, progress improvements to PROW's.

Finally, thank you to Barbara, our Clerk and all the Cllrs, past and present, for their continued efforts, and to all the other volunteers that run our community associations, church, clubs and bowling greens. From cake makers, to car parking assistants, to quiz masters, to flower arrangers, to events organisers, we are all grateful for your efforts.

Councillor James Maddocks  
Chair, Childs Ercall Parish Council

**79/2024 Report from County Councillor  
Written report provided by Cllr. Rob Gittins:**

**Cllr Rob Gittins Annual Report May 2024**

**Cheswardine Division**

This will be Cllr. Gittins final annual report as CEPC Shropshire Councillor he is stepping down from office in the local elections May 2025.

I am sure it will not be a surprise to any of you that our major focus this year has been on financial stability, and this will continue into the next financial year and beyond, especially if there are no changes to the national funding agreements for Local Government.

This is not just a problem in Shropshire, Councils across England are suffering, and our plight is made worse due to the rural nature of where we live.

We, like our nearest neighbours in Telford, Staffordshire, and Herefordshire, are all having to increase council tax, increase fees and charges and yet cut services which will include making redundancies.

There is no doubt that for most top-tier councils who have responsibility for social care services, upwards of 75% of their budgets are spent on this area. The demand, cost and increased complexity is pushing up these costs all the time and this is almost entirely the cause of our financial difficulties. Yes, there is a hangover of high inflation but in the main, it is the cost of looking after our most vulnerable people for which we have a legal and ethical responsibility.

Despite the huge amount of work that it takes to make these changes to services and staffing the Council is still investing in our County and providing a very broad spectrum of services.

**Highways** - We are firmly in pothole season, but since May 21 the trend of outstanding potholes is in a long-term decline of numbers, Shropshire Council has been shortlisted for a national award for the impact of its new approach to maintaining and improving the county's roads. The council is one of the finalists for the 'Innovation' award at the LGC (Local Government Chronicle) Awards 2024, with the winner set to be announced in June.

**Waste** - Waste is the biggest contract in the Place Directorate. There has to be significant savings made to the service so difficult decisions have had to be made. This includes:

- Charging for Green Waste (opt in service at an estimated charge of £52 per year).
- Potential Closure of 2 HRCs (consultation needed before decision on which 2 HRCs will close, I believe this is currently in progress and would urge people to comment).

Shropshire residents produce a lot of waste. On a national league table SC is listed as the second highest producer of waste per household, so bottom of the table. However, when Green Waste is removed from the equation, Shropshire sits in the top third. SC is also one of the best Local Authority's for recycling.

**PLANNING & REGULATORY SERVICES** - The Draft Local Plan seems to have been dragging on forever. A report came to Cabinet in April confirming our interactions with the inspectors. It is likely there will need to be a short period of consultation which will focus on any additions. It is still envisaged that this plan will be adopted in early 2025.

Place plans are being updated and there are a number of new Neighbourhood Plans in process, more will be coming to Cabinet and Full council for approval.

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH** - Caring for vulnerable adults is one of the Council's most important statutory duties, whether vulnerable adults with learning disabilities or mental health issues between the ages of 18 – 65 or our 65+ residents. We have a duty of care to ensure people are safe and properly looked after, either in their own homes, with domiciliary care support or in residential care or nursing homes. We work closely alongside partners from health, the voluntary and private sectors to deliver the most appropriate support to ensure people can remain in the heart of their communities for as long as possible.

Providing care for both adults and children is by far the most expensive service provided by the Council, absorbing 77% of the Council's overall budget. Shropshire is a very rural county, so travel times are longer and care delivery costs are higher than in the towns. Costs are rising every year as

our population grows and our customers develop increasingly complex needs. In order to mitigate costs, Shropshire Council has been developing technological solutions to help our elderly population stay supported in their own homes and we are working on a transformation plan with partner organisations to improve outcomes and service to our customers.

**CHILDREN AND EDUCATION** - As you may be aware, we recently had a spotlight return visit by OFSTED. We have formed a Children's Improvement Board to focus on retention and recruitment of social workers to aid not only case management levels of our teams, but address agency spends. We are not alone in this; this is a challenge nationally that all councils are facing and recent media around this has suggested there are as many as 6,000 vacant positions. As a focus we have advertised these positions with a whole host of additional incentives, and we have seen an interest, and applications are coming in and we aim for a fully permanent workforce.

Recent Secondary School places were announced with children across the county finding out what school they were allocated. 2974 applied and 2667 were offered their first preference and of all who applied 98.4% offered one of their preferences and 1.6% offered an alternative.

### **On a Local Level**

Childs Ercall has seen a new weight restriction installed on Crow Lane and hopefully this will result in fewer HGV movements accessing Ollerton business park via the village and increasing safety for both residents and especially children.

Work progresses on the A529 with new speed limits coming into force between Market Drayton and Hinstock. Work is due to begin imminently on the village centre in Hinstock including a new raised table (including 20mph speed limit) and pedestrian crossing outside the school, as well as new streetlights and road humps to reduce speed. This has been fully funded via the A529 Programme at a cost of over £4m.

Wonderful to see the completion of a number of CIL funded projects throughout the division including an extensive refurbishment of the Jubilee rooms in Hinstock, a new footway connecting Highfield Way to the rest of village in Hinstock and a footway in Woodseaves on the A529.

In the parish of Cheswardine speeding continues to be an issue in Soudley, Officers have now admitted that this is an issue and that they have recommended a reduction in speed limit down to 30mph although finding funding remains the biggest challenge in getting this project delivered.

It's good to see that road safety on the A41 is finally gaining momentum with the establishment of a partnership between T&W and Shropshire Councils actively looking at road safety measures and potential average speed cameras. I am also actively working with officers to reduce the effects of a potential road closure on the A41 over the summer which caused so much chaos and financial hardship to many businesses and communities last year.

Finally, the last 6 months have seen a tremendous amount of rainfall which has caused a huge number of issues throughout the division to not only the road network but residents' properties and businesses. I've been working hard with the drainage team to try and mitigate these issues, but I firmly believe that we need to find ways of retaining the water on the land where possible.

I look forward to continuing to listen and work with parish councils and residents on the things that matter to them and I would like to take this opportunity to thank residents and all the parish councils of the division for the support they have shown me over the past year and look forward to continuing this great work over the coming year.

**80/2024 Public Questions in respect of the above reports.**

None.

**81/2024 An opportunity for Members of the Parish to raise any matters for discussion.**

Thanks received from Councillors and members of the public to Cllr. Gittins for his work for the parish and best wishes for the future.

A member of the public expressed his view that VAS devices would not benefit the parish and any funds would be better directed towards road repairs to improve safety. A41 Safety Group was discussed. Roads in the parish have considerably improved over the past five years.

A member of the public raised the concern of cars parking completely on the footpath on St Michaels Way which is causing a safety issue for pedestrians particularly children. There is very little parking available in this area, however, PC will monitor the situation by adding an agenda item with a view to working towards a solution.

A member of the public asked if there would be a recognition for Cllr. Mackay. Chair will discuss with Christine as to what she feels appropriate. Suggestions would be very welcome from any member of the Parish. Suggestions include bulb planting along the verges, or a plaque for the playground, or photograph and tribute in the Jubilee Hall. To be discussed as an agenda item at June's meeting.

Discussion on the Public Spaces Protection Order, which is a proposal concerning dog constraints in public areas to help tackle dog fouling and nuisance. There is a consultation period in process and Cllr. Gittins encouraged parishioners to enter their comments to SC. PC will monitor situation.

Representative from the boys' football teams thanked the PC for continued use of the pitches and commented on good state of the pitches. Discussion on amending the goalposts and stepping out the path and how this would affect the pitch run off area. Chair asked for a drawing to check the area required. Charges going forward to be discussed at June's meeting. Cllr. Barnes to action a meeting with boys and girls teams before next meeting.

Discussion on the danger of the Four Crosses junction. Cllr. Gittins has brought the issue up numerous times, and he is aware that it has been picked up in the A41 Safety Group.

**82/2024 Meeting Closure**

Chair thanked members of the public and councillors for their attendance at the annual meeting.