

7. Partners and Communities Together (PACT) – West Mercia Police and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

Police

PC Matt Picken was introduced and welcomed to the meeting as the new PC for the area. He updated the meeting on the latest crime statistics for the area and directed anyone who was interested in looking at specific statistics to view the West Mercia Police webpage on www.police.uk. He advised that he didn't want people to be alarmed that there appeared to be a rise in crime figures, as the way in which crime is now recorded had changed.

Some residents' expressed concern about how many hours officers spent in Albrighton and Shifnal, how many response officers covered the area and whether there was any way that officers could book on at a nearer location. PC Picken assured residents that although the local police stations had now been closed at Albrighton and Shifnal, there were regular patrols around the villages by himself and PCSO Jacqui Fletcher and Steve Breese and that these would continue. Response officers would only be despatched to the area if necessary.

He warned that there had been an increase in scam related incidents where elderly and vulnerable people were being targeted for access to bank accounts and credit cards.

He reminded everyone to use the 101 number for reporting any non-urgent crimes and that he could also be contacted on that number. However, 999 should still be used for emergencies.

Fire

Councillor Stuart West gave a brief update on the healthy financial position of the Shropshire Fire and Rescue service and confirmed that they had completed their cuts and initially balanced the budget up to 2020, with decent reserves to take account of improvements and pensions etc. Although Shropshire had voted against they were still awaiting the outcome on the issue of relocating the fire service under the responsibility of the police and crime commissioner.

8. Highways and Grass Cutting Service

Steve Brown from Shropshire Council attended the meeting to highlight programmed forthcoming work and answer questions about concerns on the highways and grass cutting services.

He advised that the Cross Road junction in the village centre and areas of the associated approach roads would be resurfaced during the summer/autumn 2015 period.

Future works were programmed for summer 2016 and 2017 to undertake work in the following phases:

- Phase 1 – Summer 2016
 - High Street to Newhouse Lane (approx. £36,000)
 - Newhouse Lane to Patshull Road (approx. £50,000)
- Phase 2 - Summer 2017
 - Patshull Road to depot (H.R. Smith) (approx. £55,000)

- Depot to A464 (approx. £56,000)

Approximate costs for Phase 1 and 2 = £200,000, total length approx. 1,643m X 6m

Steve also outlined how the new utility reinstatements and the permit scheme was working in Shropshire. As part of this work Streetworks Inspectors are now in place, with a remit to:

- Develop, implement and refine an Enforcement Policy
- Defective utility apparatus inspection / charges
- Review street data and classification
- Investigate pre resurfacing / surface dressing for defects
- Develop, implement and refine a consequential damage policy

The inspectors had identified increased numbers of defects and non-compliance offences. The income derived from Enforcement Revenue is ring-fenced within the highways budget.

Steve assured residents that potholes would always be dealt with as soon as possible and that all pot-hole reporting should come through the customer services centre. He confirmed that footpaths were also regularly inspected.

Steve confirmed that although Shropshire had received a one-off windfall budget of £4.6m to some of the outstanding major repairs around the county, capital funding was now declining.

Steve acknowledged that there had been some recent issues relating to the grass cutting service around Shifnal and Albrighton and that the contractor Ringway had been requested to put in additional resources and the position was now improving. He confirmed that the situation would continue to be monitored.

9. Local Commissioning – Future Options for Albrighton Library

Neil Willcox, Shropshire Council gave an update on the future of the library service in Albrighton and confirmed that Shropshire Council was now actively seeking different ways to run the service. He said it was now all about the “art of the possible”. He advised that there would be an open evening event arranged locally at the library to invite any interested parties to come forward with ideas that could help with looking at alternative operating models. He advised that Shropshire Council were open minded about working differently with the aim of reducing costs.

In answer to some concerns he confirmed that a diminished service would be one option but obviously not a preferred option. He advised that Shropshire Council would consider partnership arrangements with community groups or voluntary organisations if these were viable.

He advised that the open afternoon and evening would be held on 30 July where further information and details would be available.

10. Other issues raised at the meeting

Swimming Pool

Future funding for Albrighton’s swimming pool to be reduced over forthcoming years. The Head Teacher at the Newhouse Lane site had expressed concern about the

impact on the school budgets and the future sustainability of the pool. Councillor Malcolm Pate advised that he would be hosting a meeting between the school, the Swimming Pool Committee and any other interested parties at the end of the swimming season this year, to see how to best move forward in supporting the school to retain this important facility.

Albrighton Railway Ramp Project

There had been steady progress with the project to retain the ramp and make it a permanent feature for access to the railway platform. There was now a Ramp Working Group comprising members of the four parish councils, Shropshire Council officers and members, representatives of Network Rail, London Midland and EE along with Mark Pritchard MP and the members of the Civic Society. However it had now come to light some planned major works to be undertaken to replace the bridge taking place in the summer of 2016. The Working Group would continue to work on land transfer, outstanding maintenance issues and proposals regarding changes/improvements to the road layout, however, any work will now be delayed in line with the replacement bridge work in 2016.

High Street Car Park (The Crown)

Good news was reported that the resurfacing and drainage work had now been completed as part of a partnership approach between Marston's, the Co-op and Shropshire Council. It was evident that this was a major improvement to the facility and an asset to the village. The kerbside pothole to the entrance of the car park had been reported to the highways service and would be repaired as soon as possible.