

**CARDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL MEETING
MINUTES
held in Cardington Village Hall
on
Tuesday 3rd March 2026
Commencing at 7.30pm**

Present

C'Ilr Tonks (Chairman); C'Ilr Norris (Vice Chairman); C'Ilr Maydew; C'Ilr Davies; C'Ilr Pennington; C'Ilr Lowe; C'Ilr Watkins.; C'Ilr Rogers; C'Ilr Seabury
Shropshire C'Ilr C Stanford
Clerk Mrs J Griffiths
5 members of the public attended the meeting.

1. Acceptance of Apologies

There were no apologies. All Councillors were present at the meeting.

2. Hill Ford Stages Rally 26th September 2026

Kim Butcher and David Mills from the Hill Fort Rally attended the meeting and explained the two routes. They explained that the roads on the Green Route, which feed into the Red Route to be used for the time trials would be closed between 6am and 8pm on Sunday 20th September. They have visited as many properties and businesses on these routes as possible. A Marshall will be on every junction and every public footpath junction to ensure no one strays onto the route when the trial is taking place. The timed trials will be held twice during the day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. The roads will be open between the trials.

They explained that they were now in the consultation period which ends on 12th March and any comments received will be fed into the Shropshire Council who have yet to agree the road closures.

The state of the roads in the Parish, particularly Gilberries Lane was discussed. Cheltenham Car Club who are organising the Rally do report any road defects to Shropshire Council prior to the rally and it is hoped that the many pot holes will be filled before the rally although there is no guarantee.

Any damage to verges or barriers etc would be paid for by the Car Club. They take a video of the route prior to the event to establish the state of verges, fences, barriers etc. which they rely on if any claims are made by residents.

They explained that they were happy to visit any residents who had concerns.

If they get the go ahead from Shropshire Council further information will be made available to all residents on the route. The Parish Council or local landowners were invited to identify safe areas for spectators.

Concern was expressed regarding livestock in the fields fronting the route the Rally would take. Kim Butcher assured the meeting that they would speak to farmers and landowners and anyone with concerns was welcome to contact them.

Concern was also expressed that this may become an Annual Event, which had previously been held in other neighbouring counties and was now coming to Shropshire for the first time. Kim Butcher told the meeting that they were hoping to have a float of identified stages and the same stage would not be used every year.

A member of the public thanked Kim Butcher and David Mills for their honest explanations. However, he had concerns as he lived at the bottom of Gilberries Lane.

Kim Butcher agreed to visit him to discuss his concerns.

Kim Butcher and David Mills then left the meeting.

3. Public Session

No members of the public wished to ask any further questions.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

4. Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 25th March 2025

C'llr Seabury told the meeting that he had attended the 2025 Annual Meeting but was not recorded in the Minutes as being present. The Minutes were amended and it was proposed by C'llr Rogers, seconded by C'llr Pennington and unanimously agreed that the amended minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 25th March 2025 provided a true and accurate record of the meeting.

5. Reports:-

(a) Chairman's Report (C'llr Tonks)

The Chairman gave the following report:, which had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting and read out at the meeting:-

The council year began with elections. Our Parish Council election was uncontested with the withdrawal of Dan Boulton and the election of Andy Lowe with all other councillors seeking re-election. We expressed our gratitude to Dan for his commitment during his time on the PC and were sad to see a younger PCllr. withdraw but were very pleased to welcome Andy as another younger representative of the community.

The SC election was subject to boundary changes and contested. We said farewell to Dan Morris who sought re-election elsewhere and we welcomed Colin Stanford a retired doctor as our new SCllr. in the newly expanded Corvedale Division. SC saw a political change with the Lib Dems becoming the dominant party. Stuart Anderson, our MP, is now the only Conservative MP in Shropshire and Colin one of only 7 Conservative SCllrs.

It was widely known before the election SC had seriously financial challenges but it has been revealed the situation has become progressively worse as the months have progressed. SC along with other councils has been appealing to central government for emergency support but the current Labour government is favouring urban rather than rural communities and their withdrawal of rural funding is exacerbating SC's situation. SC is dealing with a relatively large sparsely populated area with an above average aged community resulting in income / head at lower levels. SC has revealed that 75-80% of its funds are devoted to the statutory services of care, leaving an insufficient amount for all the other services the community expects it to provide.

Our PC year was again dominated by matters relating to Highways and the road closures following the collapse of 2 culverts the previous autumn. Following appeals, SC promised work would start in early summer but that was delayed until July and then to August and work was eventually completed on the second culvert just before Christmas. Incredibly SC's contractor, WSP, decided that the culverts could be repaired rather than replaced contrary to common sense and the expert view of several of our contacts in the construction industry. 50% of Grove Farm culvert was eventually replaced, dislodged bricks on the upstream wall remains unattended to and SC has informed us that money is being withheld from the sub-contractor due to the poor quality of their work. When work began on the Lea Hills culvert it was unsurprisingly found to be worse than anticipated and had to be entirely replaced. The stream is now piped, road water piped into the stream with excess via a spillway. Both the upstream and downstream walls were rebuilt in stone. It looks that this replacement culvert on the

less used road will stand the test of time, in stark contrast to the Grove Farm incomplete repair.

The work on the culverts was originally scheduled for a total of 5 but actually took around 20 weeks. Road closures were in place for 10 and 13 months respectively causing extra costs and inconvenience to all residents and financial damage to businesses. Observation raised many concerns as sub-contractor productivity levels were pitiful and very expensive equipment was left on site throughout the period. Management and coordination by SC appeared absent and contractors and sub-contractors seemed left to their own devices. Ultimately it is council tax payers who suffer as SC claims it is short of money to provide services but those undertaken are so inefficiently performed. We may all question whether care services less visible to most of us are equally mis-managed and as poorly cost effective.

SC's Lib-Dem leadership has responded to the threat of bankruptcy in following other councils in testing the idea of devolving services and encouraging partnership working with Town and Parish Councils. Alex Wagner, Deputy Leader of SC, accepted our invitation to address the PC on these ideas in January at a meeting well attended by residents. Currently the proposal is being piloted by 6 larger councils prior to rolling out to all other councils next year. Last year our PC was very confident it could have replaced the culverts in a fraction of time and at much lower cost to SC but taking over routine maintenance poses different issues as SC is expecting PC's to raise money to cover costs by raising the precept. In a quirk SC is limited by central government in raising council tax but legally there is no such restriction on PC's.

To maintain the roads in the Parish to the standards we all expect would require potholes to be promptly filled, gullies regularly emptied and occasionally jetted, verges cut, passing places cleared and debris removed from roads. Taking on these activities would require management to agree contracts either with locals or companies suitably equipped and approved; works would need to be monitored and administration set up to issue documentation and settle invoices. In turn the PC may acquire extra legal liabilities. It would be feasible for the PC to take on all these activities, but it could not be on the current voluntary commitment of PCllrs supported by similar community efforts and therefore would need to be funded via increased precept.

It is unclear at this stage as to how much funding, if any, SC would be able or prepared to provide the PC towards the costs of activities the PC might undertake. Equally the PC would need to test the residents' attitude to the possibility of raising the precept. As a very approximate initial ballpark estimate these routine activities could easily cost £50-100kpa and with some 200 properties in the Parish the increased precept would therefore be £250-500 on average / household. Due to banding smaller properties would therefore be charged less and larger ones more.

We can all speculate on various scenarios. Will SC conclude that given its financial situation there will be no money for these activities and this community can either raise the money to undertake these routine activities or go without? Will SC provide some money to reduce the PC's need to raise the precept? If our PC took on these tasks, would SC then provide equivalent services to other areas that chose not to co-operate?

Unlike many others, we are fortunate that our PC does not have any vacancies but current PCllrs may see this initiative as a step too far for them to be voluntarily involved and could dissuade others from standing for election in the future.

One model which was being informally developed by a couple of PC Chairs at a recent meeting was for SC to approve and contract with suppliers in order to offer services to PC's. SC would provide, in effect, a rebate of proportion of council tax to each PC to spend with and manage the work of these approved contractors leaving each PC to call off more services at their cost should they so decide. Equally if an offered service could be undertaken better or at cheaper cost locally the PC would be free to fund and contract the extra work separately.

The impact of the 2025 autumn flooding caused major disruption throughout 2025 but fortunately there was not a similar incidence. In contrast we suffered a severe drought leading to the irony of all that water a few months ago and then a risk to supplies. Investigations about flood protection were opened with SC and we were advised a starting point would be a survey costing £1600. The organisation that would undertake the survey however was unable to accept 2 invitations to meet the PC to explain the benefits and justify the cost. The local situation remains under PC review, and it is known there is a major project underway in the Severn Catchment area which may have some spin-offs for other Parishes. It also appears Severn Trent are becoming more active in flood management and water quality and may offer advice or action.

The Parish Council routinely builds reserves to ensure it can cover the cost of maintenance of the cemetery which is the part of the church yard it operates on behalf of the community. During the year a length of the stone wall was repointed by a local contractor to maintain its appearance and to avoid future more costly repairs. Following storm damage and noting some local concerns the PC initiated an expert survey of all the trees in the cemetery. As a result, a contractor has been appointed to undertake the recommended work which is scheduled for February 16th.

Once again on behalf of the PC I would record our thanks to our clerk, Jennie Griffiths, for her professional commitment to all our activities and ensuring we comply with the law and regulations. I also record my personal thanks to Jennie and to my PCllr colleagues who determinedly reflect local views to ensure our activities further enhance our wonderful community.

Looking to the year ahead we look forward to working closely with SCllr Colin Stanford along with all his other rural Parishes in the Corvedale we navigate our way through the opportunities and risks created by the proposed devolution of services.

(b) Financial Report (Clerk)

The Clerk gave the following report: which had also been circulated prior to the meeting-

I continue to report the latest financial position to every Parish Council meeting, together with a copy of the latest bank statement and a bank reconciliation, and when agreed they are both signed by a non cheque signatory. At every meeting the Parish Council maintains a clear process for cheque approval and this has been followed throughout the year.

In the 2025/26 financial year the Parish Council applied for the usual environmental maintenance grant of £1,500 with the Parish Council providing £1,500 matched funding which was built into the precept. However, Shropshire Council cut the grant from £1,500 per parish to £750. As we had £1,500 built into the precept we are able to fund a total of £2,250 for environmental maintenance work in the parish during 2025/26.

To date Shropshire Council have not announced if this grant will be available for environmental maintenance work during 2026/27. However, the Parish Council have built an allowance of £2,000 for some work into the 2025/26 precept.

The Amount which was carried forward from 2024/25 into the 2025/26 financial year amounted £10,000.19 and this was made up as follows:-

£ 154 .00	Burial fees (£3,804 carried forward plus £350 income for fallen tree in churchyard less £4,000 used for church wall repairs)
£1,599.00	Balance of the Community Infrastructure Levy money received
£1,106.34	Balance in the Neighbourhood Fund (£359.34 carried forward plus £747 received during 2024/25)
£7,050.69	Actual parish council balance carried forward to 2025/26. A claim for £518.84 for the repayment of VAT was claimed and paid in the 2025/26 financial year..

The Parish Council now have online access to the bank accounts which enables accounts to be paid by BACS. The payments due are agreed at every Parish Council Meeting, they Clerk then makes the BACS payments on line and they are then authorized online by C'lr Watkins and the payments released.

The Clerk was given authority by the Parish Council to transfer any surplus funds throughout the year to a new Business Savings Account, and this does attract a small amount of interest. This was reduced from 1.10% to 1.05% with effect from January 2026.

The bank balance after payment of accounts due to be paid tonight amounts to £12.622 40. This will be carried forward into the 2026/27 accounts and is made up as follows:-

£ 416.00	Balance in Burial fees
£1,599.16	Balance in the Community Infrastructure Levy
£1,106.34	Neighbourhood Fund
£ 750.00	Environmental Maintenance Grant Work not yet paid
£1,500.00	Environmental Maintenance matched funding not yet paid
£7,261.90	Parish Council Balance to be carried forward into 2026/.27

The 2025/26 Accounts will now be prepared and sent to the Internal Auditor and presented to the May Parish Council Meeting for approval.

(c) Shropshire Council Report (C'lr C Stanford)

Shropshire C'lr Stanford gave the following report

- Shropshire Council have been successful in obtaining a loan from the Government in the sum of £192m. £71m would be used to balance the books for 2025/26 and the remainder would be available to draw down during 2026/27. To avoid high interest repayments on borrowing, draw downs would be done in stages when funds were required.
- The increase in Council Tax payments would give an additional £8m

- The escalating costs of social care is putting immense pressure on the County Council budget.
- A resident had contacted Shropshire Council and C'Ilr Stanford requesting a grit bin at Cardington Moor and this has been provided and filled with salt
- Ahead of talks on Devolution Shropshire Council prepared a spreadsheet showing spending on services per town/parish council. This proved to be inaccurate and is being challenged.
- The Shirehall was due to be demolished, and the site used for housing. However other options are now being investigated. At the last Full Council Meeting the Leader agreed that options and costs would be considered.
- The Riverside Development, following demolition of the shopping centre, was still ongoing.
- C'Ilr Stanford told the meeting that he had been appointed to serve on the Global Health Initiative Group.

C'Ilr Stanford agreed to contact the Highways Department to ask what work they are planning to carry out at Grove Farm Culvert in July and report back to the Parish Council.

C'Ilr Stanford then left the meeting to attend another Parish Council Meeting in his division.

7. Reports from Parochial Charities/Organisations

(a) Village Hall (C'Ilr Davies)

C'Ilr Davies told the meeting that Cardington Capers had purchased a shed and this had been erected on land at the rear of Village Hall by a local resident and would be used as storage for Cardington Capers. The meeting thanked C'Ilr Pennington who allowed this to be erected on his land.

(b) Cardington Charity (C'Ilr Pennington)

C'Ilr Pennington told the meeting that the Trustees had been joined by the new Vicar and Eileen Burgess served as a very efficient Secretary. The Charity had given support totalling £3,850 throughout the year. Support had been given to 16 widows in the parish at Christmas, 3 students and 2 Charities (Severn Hospice and Hope House)'.

C'Ilr Pennington told the meeting that the Young Farmers continue to use the Meeting Room and new tenants are now in the house adjoining the Meeting Room and it was good to see a local couple taking the tenancy.

8. Electors Questions

There were no electors questions.

9. Date of next Annual Meeting – Tuesday 2nd March 2026

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.18pm