

Broadwas and Cotheridge Parish Council

Annual Report for the Annual Parish Meeting

6th May 2025

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the activity the Parish Council has undertaken during the year since the last annual parish meeting. It also seeks to identify any learning and achievements in order to inform the thinking about what the Parish Council seeks to deliver in the coming year, on behalf of parishioners.

The Parish Council shares its minutes, accounts and reports on the Parish Council website, which provide more detail of what has been undertaken, so this report provides a summary of the year's activities.

Thanks

As in previous years, serving councillors have contributed actively and in different ways. Our Clerk Lisa Law has worked tirelessly to ensure our business is conducted as efficiently as possible and to the highest standards. Our Lengthsman Jeremy Moore has continued to provide us with a reliable and professional service.

We would also like to thank those parishioners who have attended meetings, contacted us and responded to requests for help.

Our District (Barbara Jones Williams) and County Councillors have worked closely with us, and our new County Councillor (Mel Fordington) who was elected last May, has gone some way to restoring our faith in the effectiveness of this role.

We also thank the members of the Broadwas Village Hall Management Committee for their continued and successful efforts.

We also welcomed a new Parish Councillor from Cotheridge (Shirley Hensher).

Our Priorities

- 1. To improve financial management and governance.** We have continued to improve and review how we do things. This year's auditor's report will provide further confirmation of progress. The Parish Council has worked within budget, has maintained and improved systems for minutes and reports, and made further improvements to the website. Policies and Procedures have been regularly reviewed and a number of new ones introduced. Councillors and the Clerk have been offered regular training and have attended these where appropriate. Councillors have been regularly updated on local and national developments and issues as they affect the Parish Council and the parish.
- 2. To maintain a strategy to reduce the amount of funds held by the Parish Council.** The Parish Council was advised that the level of reserves held should be reduced, and the Parish Council agreed with this. The past year represents year 5 of a 10-year plan to gradually reduce the amount of funds held. This has been achieved by a below inflation rate rise in the precept. While bank balances may still appear comparatively high, this reflects the holding of earmarked funds for specific future commitments, ongoing projects, asset maintenance and prudent contingency provision. Reserve levels are reviewed annually to ensure they remain appropriate, proportionate and aligned with the Council's financial risk assessment and future spending plans.
- 3. To continue to improve how we respond to enquires and the things we have decided to do.** We have taken further steps to ensure that we respond promptly to all enquiries and the actions we agree to take. Reporting to meetings has been modified and all actions are subject to regular review in terms of

priority and completion. This is reviewed monthly by the Clerk and the Chair. We have responded to feedback from Parishioners and where possible taken steps to improve our performance.

4. Continue to look after our assets

4.1 In conjunction with our solicitors, we have continued to work towards completing the challenging task of ensuring that all the assets the Parish Council are responsible for are registered with the Land Registry. This has taken much longer than we thought in part, because it has been difficult to find some key records. In the coming year the Clerk will be asked to continue with this task and to look at ways of ensuring that Parish Council records are unified and stored securely. This will be assisted by the decision taken in the year to move to an online system for storing records and sharing information.

4.2 Berryfields As in previous years, the play and adult activity equipment was subject to an annual inspection (as well as regular visual inspections) and the Parish Council has acted on the recommendations. The grass and hedges have been cut regularly, and a number of routine repairs were undertaken to the fencing. In July of last year, we made an application to the Malvern Hills Legacy Grant scheme and were successful. This means that shortly the car park will be re-surfaced, the fencing replaced (to include new fencing around the children's play area), the provision of a new seating area (where the container used to be), the provision of a new piece of play equipment (to replace one that had to be scrapped) and new signage. This investment, planned with input from parishioners, includes match funding from the Parish Council and will help ensure that the recreation space will continue to benefit parishioners and visitors to the parish.

4.3 Broad Green We were relieved to be able to secure the services of Adrian Bullock to do the annual cut. This has to be done at a particular time to help ensure the green maintains its status as a SSSI. We have also collaborated with, and supported some, parishioners (particularly Mr. Chris Croft) to replace the bench. Councillor Jones Williams kindly assisted

with a financial donation. Discussions are taking place to look at the siting of a second bench.

4.4 Broadwas Village Hall We have continued to support the Village Hall Management Committee, who manage the village hall as a registered charity. In recent years the Management Committee has revitalised the village hall, the facilities and events it offers.

4.5 Defibrillators We have continued to maintain the device located at the Royal Oak and this is regularly checked and maintained. Our aim is to promote a parish wide network of defibrillators, currently there is also one at Broadwas Sports Association and Broadwas Primary School. Discussions are taking place with the Lower Teme Parish and Laylocks Garden Centre with a view to installing devices in Cotheridge.

4.6 Dog waste During the year the Parish Council has received a number of complaints about the failure of dog owners to act responsibly. The Parish Council responded and there are now 2 new waste bins (Stoney Ley and outside St Leonard's in Cotheridge). We are grateful to Malvern Hills District Council for including these in their emptying service.

- 5. A44 Road Safety.** For some years the Parish Council has recognised that speeding and road safety are high priority issues for many parishioners. It is also the case that for some years the Parish Council, through its County Councillor, has been seeking to engage the County Council in order to encourage them to come forward with some proactive and positive proposals. In November of last year, the Parish Council following research and in part out of frustration at the lack of a serious response from the County Council, formally resolved and adopted a position statement. This sets out the improvements we want the County Council to consider.

Our new County Councillor has, along with our District Councillor and MP, listened to and taken forward our concerns, and efforts are continuing to more fully engage the County Council. We are grateful to West Mercia Police for maintaining the Broadwas stretch as a priority for enforcement activity and

have recently welcomed an offer to extend this to other sections of the A44.

The Parish Council continues to challenge the view that the only solution is enforcement and has seen some movement by the County Council towards a more comprehensive and proactive approach to improving signage, road markings and other measures that could strengthen and encourage road users to drive in a responsible manner. It is presently the case that the County Council will not consider changes to the speed limit in Cotheridge or ways of reducing risk and entry speeds regarding the bends at Hill Top and Broadwas village.

The sad occurrence of 2 fatalities in the last year has only served to emphasise the importance of improving measures and conditions to reduce risk.

A grant from our County Councillor has helped to part fund the replacement of the Vehicle Activated Signs in Broadwas (which will be completed shortly) with clearer and more modern versions.

6. **Two villages one parish.** We now alternate our meetings between the 2 villages and will continue to do this. We also try to ensure that we adopt an inclusive approach to the 2 villages and other smaller scale settlements.
7. **Review of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.** This is an ongoing and considerable piece of work. We are grateful for the funding we were able to access from the Government, and subsequent to them scrapping this scheme, from the District Council. This has kept the Parish Council financial investment manageable and ensured we have had access to specialist support and advice.

The final draft is now complete and will be subject to a series of further steps (including consultation and a referendum), which it is hoped will be completed by this time next year.

- 8. Planning and development.** The Parish Council has responded as a statutory consultee to all notifications from the Planning Authority (Malvern Hills District Council). In doing so we have sought to apply the present NDP consistently and consider each application carefully and on its own merit. We have responded to approaches from interested parties and sought to openly and carefully consider our responses. We amended our internal process to ensure that any consultation deadlines that fell outside of our meeting dates, were more fully recorded. The Chair attended one site visit of the Northern Area Planning Committee in the parish.
- 9. Recruitment of new parish councillors.** As noted, we have welcomed one new Councillor but it remains the case that we still have 4 vacancies (1 for Cotheridge and 3 for Broadwas). Whilst we understand that the Parish Councillor role might not be one that immediately seems attractive and that all of us have to manage competing priorities and demands, it remains disappointing. This does constrain our rate of progress, and it is to the credit of serving councillors that they do their best to fill the gaps.

In summary and looking forwards

From the Parish Council perspective, the evidence suggests that we are in a stronger position than we were a year ago. This is not to say that there are not things we could do better or things that we would like to do, but it remains important to balance the time shared with us by each Councillor with seeking to do the right things in a responsible way.

The coming year(s) are likely to see some significant changes to the ways in which Local Government is organised and operates. This will heighten the challenge for Parish Councils to play their part in order to be heard and taken seriously.

Richard Burrows
On behalf of the Parish Council

Appendix 1 Broadwas and Cotheridge Parish Council – Councillor Attendance Matrix

Attendance record from May 2025 to March 2026, including meeting dates for annual reporting purposes.

Meeting Dates

Meeting Period	Meeting Date
May 2025	Annual Parish Meeting / Annual Council Meeting
June 2025	Ordinary Parish Council Meeting
August 2025	Ordinary Parish Council Meeting
September 2025	Ordinary Parish Council Meeting
October 2025	Ordinary Parish Council Meeting
November 2025	Ordinary Parish Council Meeting
January 2026	Ordinary Parish Council Meeting
February 1 2026	Ordinary Parish Council Meeting
February 2 2026	Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting
March 2026	Ordinary Parish Council Meeting

Councillor Attendance Matrix

Councillor	May 2025	Jun 2025	Aug 2025	Sep 2025	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Jan 2026	Feb 1 2026	Feb 2 2026	Mar 2026	Total Attended	Attendance %
Cllr Burrows	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10	100%
Cllr Cullen	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	90%
Cllr Guest	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	80%
Cllr Worrall	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	6	60%
Cllr Hensher	—	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	100%*
Cllr Jones-Williams MHDC	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	5	50%
Cllr Fordington WCC	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	5	50%

* Cllr Hensher attendance percentage calculated from the point of appointment/co-option.

Members of Public (MOP) Attendance

Meeting	Number of Members of Public
May 2025	3
Jun 2025	3
Aug 2025	4
Sep 2025	4
Oct 2025	4
Nov 2025	3
Jan 2026	7
Feb 1 2026	2
Feb 2 2026	0
Mar 2026	3