

# Parish Council of Coleford

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## Newsletter for February 2022

### Councilor resignation

The Council were sad to receive a letter from Cllr Colin Turner which confirmed that after over 30 years serving as a Councillor including a stint as the chairman, he wished to resign to allow him time to pursue other activities. Colin's local knowledge and history of the village will be very much missed but we all wish him well.

### Planning

2022/0119/FUL - Construction of a Vegetable and Agricultural Equipment Store

Ravens' Drift, Lipyeate Cross To Luckington Cross, Coleford

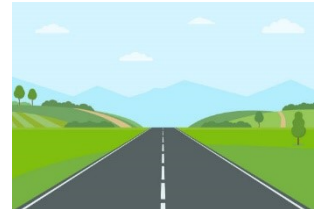
The application was recommended for approval with the following conditions:



1. There be no external lighting
2. The two containers currently on site be removed as mentioned in the submitted existing block plan
3. The site should not be used for retail purposes on the grounds of highways including access to the site
4. Landscaping and tree planting be implemented to help reduce the impact of the building

### Highways

The requested repairs at Brewery Lane, Vobster and at Stockhill have all been completed along with some improvements at Stoke Bottom. Further repairs at the entrances to Halecombe and Whatley quarries are being progressed. A meeting with Charlie Higgins of Somerset Highways has been arranged for 10<sup>th</sup> March to review Coleford's issues.



The comprehensive list of all Gladman related highway upgrades has been submitted to County Highways

### Pedestrian access to Bishop Henderson School

The safety of all pedestrians negotiating the village roads is a concern and the Parish Council are working hard in conjunction with Somerset Highways to make improvements to ensure the village is a safer place for all.

For families walking to Bishop Henderson school it has been suggested that accessing the footpath via the yellow gate on Church Street, may be a safer option than the busier Anchor Road route. This quieter route would access Beacon View, Coal Barton and into the school.

### Date of Next Meetings:

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 – Planning meeting

9<sup>th</sup> March 2022 – Monthly meeting



If you have any issues that you would like to bring to the Parish Council's attention please contact the Clerk on 01749 880428 or email [clerkcolefordsomerset@gmail.com](mailto:clerkcolefordsomerset@gmail.com) Check out the website [www.colefordsomerset.info](http://www.colefordsomerset.info)

Philip Ham

## Unitary Update

Cllr Ham gave the following report from the Unitary Scrutiny meeting: Sarah Wakefield was elected as Chair with Bob Filmer Vice Chair. The Terms of Reference and meeting protocol were agreed.

Programme update of Governance and workstreams, the six areas are:

- 1) Governance
- 2) People
- 3) Assets and Technology
- 4) Service alignment and improvement
- 5) Finance
- 6) Communities, Customers, Partnership

This has created 74 sub streams with already 150 county and district staff involved. It was also agreed that the following was required,

- Communications plan
- Local Community Network pilots to be monitored
- Quality assurance
- Benefit management
- Risk Management and Register

The budget for the transition of 18.1 m was scrutinised and agreed. It was agreed that a Finance and Asset protocol was set up for year 22/23 to protect the new Somerset Council.

All the above have now been implemented by the Full Board, at which they also agreed the funding for the Voluntary sectors the sum of 2.4 m to cover 23/24 year to provide certainty.

## Mendip District Council report District Cllrs Ham & Townsend

Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2)– A briefing session from Mendip Planning confirmed our fears that the lack of 5-year housing land supply could be an issue for many years. District Cllrs Ham and Townsend sought from Mendip its proposals to put in hand a plan to rectify the shortage. The response that “Officers will review in the coming months how the requirements and timescales for plan review can be progressed as a joint workstream in transition to the new Somerset authority” is not acceptable and will provide no protection to villages from speculative development. Appeals submitted against Mendip’s refusals at Leigh on Mendip, Stoke St Michael, Chilcompton and White Post will show how vulnerable they are. District Cllrs Ham and Townsend also requested confirmation of the LPP2 review programme at Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> February and were given no comfort by the statement “There will be a process leading to joint agreement on a review programme ahead of vesting day” – which is 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, implying we could be over a year away from even establishing a programme.

## Somerset County Council report from County Cllr Ham

**Coronavirus infection rates:** As of 28<sup>th</sup> January, the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 106,569 (27% up from 83,300 on 30<sup>th</sup> December) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 977. The rate per 100,000 stands at 964.2 (766.6) for Somerset with Mendip at 766.5 (892.0), Sedgemoor at 1143.1 (756.6), South Somerset 921.3 (684.3) and SW&T at 1016.0 (770.4). The number of total deaths across the County is currently below the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 0.8 and 1.1

**Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline:** A single phone number continues to be available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus-related support. **0300 790 6275**, is open seven days a week from 8am to 6pm.

**Vaccination programmes roll-out:** Somerset continues to have one of the highest vaccination rates in the country with the latest figures showing over 96.2% of the 18+ population having had one dose of vaccine and 93.8% having had both doses. In total 63.7% of the adult population have also received their booster.

**Local Government Reorganisation:** Following the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) decision to support the move to a single Unitary Council across Somerset the Structural Changes Order was laid before Parliament on 24<sup>th</sup> January. The agreed vesting date remains 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. The first elections to the new authority together with Somerset Town and Parish elections will be held on 5th May 2022.

**County Council Revenue Budget:** Somerset County Council has published its last draft proposed budget ahead of the creation of a new unitary Somerset Council in April 2023. The council is proposing major increases in investment in care services, with an increase for Adult Social Care of £18m (13%), and over £12m (also 13%) for Children’s Services. The increase in funding for Adult Social Care in part reflects the council’s recent decision to support an increase in carers pay and to provide a retention bonus for care staff in Somerset. This is intended to support the recruitment and retention of staff in a challenging job market for care services.

**County Council Capital Budget:** SCC is proposing to allocate £48 million for capital spending in the coming year. This includes substantial investment in measures to tackle climate change, building on the council’s successful Climate Emergency Community Fund. The council has allocated £1 million in new match funding to support the “decarbonisation” of schools – on top of the existing £7.8 million investment in decarbonising the council’s buildings, including libraries. A further £1 million has been allocated for electric fleet vehicles and charging infrastructure. A new investment of £1 million has been allocated to local transport schemes.

**Proposed Council Tax:** Council Tax for SCC is proposed to rise by two per cent with a further one per cent rise for the social care precept. This compares to UK inflation in December running at over four percent and will mean that Somerset County Council continues to set one of the lowest County Tax rates in the UK.

**Somerset libraries:** Since libraries reopened their doors last April, Somerset Libraries have had over half a million visits and have welcomed over 16,000 new members. To encourage even more people to reconnect with library services and support communities as they start to recover from the impact of the pandemic Somerset Libraries is running two initiatives from 21<sup>st</sup> January until the 31<sup>st</sup> March. Children and young people aged 17 and under will not be charged for using any library services. This includes requesting books from other libraries, borrowing DVDs and no charges for the late return of items! The service will also be happy to clear outstanding charges, for all customers, incurred before 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022, no questions asked. To take advantage of this ‘welcome back’ offer, visit your local library before the 31<sup>st</sup> March and speak to a member of staff.

**Climate change action 1:** Somerset County Council has been ranked as the top county council in the UK when it comes to taking a lead on climate change. Climate Emergency UK has ranked all 409 local authorities, scoring them against nine categories, including how well councils’ plans would mitigate the impact of climate change locally, whether the climate and ecological emergency was integrated into existing policies, community engagement, climate education, scale of emissions targets, and commitments to tackle the ecological emergency. Somerset County Council was named as the top county council, meanwhile Somerset West & Taunton Council was ranked as the top district council

**Climate change action 2:** A grant available to help Somerset people benefit from energy efficient installations worth up to £10,000 has been extended until June 2022. The Green Homes Grant Scheme allows eligible homeowners to apply for vouchers to install climate-friendly energy saving measures such as insulation, air source heat pumps, or double glazing. The work can be worth up to £10,000, with nothing for homeowners to pay towards the cost of the works. To be eligible for the grants, the residents of the property must have a low income and the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property must be rated D, E, F or G. visit [www.heatsomerset.co.uk](http://www.heatsomerset.co.uk) for more information.

**Somerset County Council (SCC) council tax:** This will probably be 2% + 1% for adult social care. The SCC 22/23 budget shows an increase of 18m for adult social care, and 12 m for children services which amounts to 159.6 million to be spent on Adult Social care, and 105.2 million on Children Services out of total budget of 370 million. This means there is only 106 million for all other services, i.e. Highways, Maintenance of Assets, Schools, Bus subsidies, etc. We are the 4th lowest county council tax collector in England.

Somerset County Council is top of the County Council Climate change league, with Taunton and West top of the District league with Mendip in the top 10.

**Bus Back Better:** The 163 million applied for by SCC could be reduced as the 7.2 billion pot has been overprescribed. The amount awarded should be known by end of February and will go to Cabinet in March to agree where the improvements could be implemented after consultation.