

Parish Council of Coleford

Gallant Hill Farm, Foxcote, Radstock, BA3 5YB
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****DRAFT** Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held Wednesday 8th March 2023**

Present

Cllr Ham (Chairman presiding) Cllrs Banks, Bell, Drescher, Evans, Moulding, Pearce and Cllr West

2 members of the public were present. The Clerk, Vickie Watts taking the minutes

1. Public Forum

1. Cllr Evans confirmed that the streetlights on Church Street and over the junction outside the Co-op are still off.
2. It was asked whether there was an update on the fence installed adjacent to the junction of Preachers Vale.

Action: Cllr Townsend to action both points

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Allen, Barrett, Paterson and Townsend which were accepted by the Chair.

3. Declaration of Interest and Dispensations granted since last meeting

There were none.

4. Agree the minutes

The minutes from the Parish Council meetings held on the 8th and 22nd February had been circulated to all Councilors prior to the meeting. It was agreed that they accurately reflected the meeting and should be approved.

Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to upload to website

5. Actions from the minutes

All actions had been completed or would be discussed as an agenda item during the meeting apart from:

- It was noted that the notice board outside the piano shop was no longer as visible as it was when parishioners were visiting the post office and shop. It was agreed that the new co-op would be approached to establish if they would consider a new noticeboard outside the store.

Action: Clerk to write to the store manager at the earliest opportunity.

- Establish ownership of the wall which runs along the footpath behind the Kings Head public house.

Action: Clerk to establish who owns the wall

- clerk would draft an agreement passing the ownership of the container from CRG to Coleford Parish Council.

Action: Clerk to draft the agreement

6. **Co-option of Councilor,**

There is currently one vacancy, which the Clerk will continue to advertise.

7. **Planning Applications**

There were none.

8. **Planning updates including enforcement issue**

There were none.

9. **Reports**

1. PCSO – A generic report had been received and circulated. The current PCSO's for the Rural Beat North are Robert Nell and Amanda Ware.
2. Somerset County Council – Cllr Ham reported that he and Cllr Clarke had consulted with Parishes within their ward to establish issues relating to the highways. 10 parishes have responded highlighting that the majority of the issues are pot hole repairs, white lining, twisted road signs etc. A meeting will take place with Sara Davis of Somerset Highways to establish how these issues can be addressed.

Coleford is in the Shepton LCN which is made up of 16 role or parishes. At the moment it is not known where they will meet or how often. More information will be forthcoming over the coming weeks.

The budget for Somerset has been agreed. Council tax will rise by 5%, 2 of which are for adult social care.

Somerset County Council Finances: Somerset County Council continues to show a significant projected overspend of £24.3 million as at Month 9, with the main areas Social Care causing the greatest overspends. The Revenue and Capital budgets for the new Somerset Council were proposed and debated at a Full Council meeting on the 22nd February 2023. There are significant challenges in delivering this budget given the current trend in overspend and the risk to some savings which are planned.

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, vesting day for the new Unitary Council remains as 1st April 2023. The last District and County Council meetings are currently being held with a civic service to mark the move to Unitary in Wells Cathedral on March 12th.

Debate not hate: Somerset County Council's last Full Council meeting saw members from all political parties voting to support a motion signing up the new Council -elected to the Local Government Association's Debate Not Hate campaign. The most recent Local Government Association (LGA) Councillor Census revealed seven in ten councillors reported experiencing abuse and intimidation within the last 12 months while one in 10 experienced abuse frequently. At the meeting, councillors agreed to work together on a cross-party basis to set an example of healthy debate and denounced abusive or threatening behaviour from anyone within the community on social media and in-person.

School Term dates 2024/5 and 2025/6: SCC has published two separate consultations: one for the 2024/5 and one for the 2025/26 academic years. Both consultations are particularly relevant to parents and carers with responsibility for school age children. The consultations run until the 17th March, with results being published in April this year.

Independent Living Centres: The Somerset Independent Living Centres are filled with useful technology and equipment designed to make daily living at home easier for anyone who may need support living independently, such as older people, or people of any age with disabilities, sensory impairments, or health conditions. There are two such centres in Somerset, one in

Wellington and the other in Shepton Mallet. Members of the public can book a free appointment to visit the centre by calling 0300 123 2224 or email adults@somerset.gov.uk

Step Up to Social Work: Somerset's 'Step Up to Social Work' programme offers an opportunity to train for a career in social work and receive a tax-free bursary of almost £20,000. Successful completion of the 14-month training programme leads to a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work, enabling students to apply to register as a Social Worker. Recruitment for the programme is open now, with assessments scheduled for June and July 2023, with a January 2024 study start date. The programme runs once every two years, dependent on Government funding. Applications can be made via www.susw.eu-careers.pocketrecruiter.com

Domestic Abuse: Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service helpline took 301 calls from people between the age of 16 – 20-year-olds since April last year, compared to 128 in 2021/22 – a nearly three times increase. Proportionately young people experience the highest rates of domestic abuse of any age group. It is estimated that 1 in 5 children are exposed to domestic abuse. Young people can find support by calling on 0800 69 49 999 or at www.somerseturvivors.org.uk.

Secondary School Places: Figures show that 4,785 secondary school applications were received this year compared to 4,866 in 2022. In total, **92.8% (down from 94.8% last year)** of children received a place at their first preference school, with **98.12% (down from 98.35% last year)** offered one of their top three choices.

Somerset Community Awards: Community heroes from across Somerset were recognised at the latest Somerset County Council Chair's Award for Service to the Community. The awards-giving has been an annual event for many years and this year's ceremony at Taunton Rugby Club was attended by 140 people, including 43 nominees from across Somerset. The award recipients were nominated by their parish and town councils for recognition of their outstanding contribution to their communities.

Route 1 Advocacy: Somerset County Council's Route 1 Advocacy service is seeking Advocates and Independent Visitors to spend quality time with young people and help transform their lives. The independent visitor role involves taking a long-term interest in the life of a young person in care – something which many of them have never experienced. Trained volunteers are matched with a child in care and provide an invaluable service, one which is potentially life-changing for the young person involved, and even for the volunteer themselves. Advocacy is a short-term commitment, in which new advocates attend an additional 2 days of training before being added to a 'bank' of volunteer advocates, to be contacted when needed. Full training is provided by Route 1 Advocacy. To find out more about the roles and apply, please visit: <https://volunteering.somerset.gov.uk/route1>

Highways 1: The B3191 at Cleeve Hill near Watchet is set to remain closed indefinitely for safety reasons. Detailed inspections have revealed further cliff movement is inevitable and it will be impossible to safely reopen the road without major intervention which will require significant funding, currently unavailable to the Council.

Highways 2: Somerset County Council has announced that its bid for funding the Ashcott/Walton bypass has been unsuccessful despite the narrow route and volume of passing traffic, including large numbers of HGVs. Alternative funding is currently not available.

Mendip District Council – Cllr Ham confirmed that this would be the last time he spoke as a Mendip District Councillor after 16 years as District Councillor for Coleford. During that time, he has shared the role with other district councillors, of late Alan Townsend. As the elected unitary councillor, he will continue to report for Somerset.

Cllr Townsend did not attend but sent the following report:

PLANNING

Local Plan – an Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council was called on 9-2-23 by the Opposition to request an explanation of the circumstances which have cost the Council some £60,000 in its unsuccessful defence of a Judicial Review of its failings on Local Plan Part 2. The JR specifically related to the mis-handling of the allocation of 505 dwellings in the north east of the district.

Additional questions were asked about the failure to produce a 5-year housing land supply and what the programme was to rectify the shortfall. The effects of this failure are evident with 3 sites within a few miles of here, Gladman at Coleford, White Post and now Stoke, all being approved on greenfield sites not designated in LPP2 despite massive opposition. A new Local Plan has to be in place by 31-3-2028 - that's 5 years away, does this mean another 5 years exposure to unwanted development? The final Full Council meeting of Mendip DC on 27th February made no mention of the Local Plan problems.

White Post – the Planning Board on 15th March will be reconsidering the application for 270 houses immediately to the south of the existing built-up limit. Although the site was removed from the Local Plan by the Judicial Review it will be difficult to argue that the development would cause Significant and Demonstrable harm as the site immediately behind the White Post was approved at appeal.

Anchor Road surveying – no reply from Mendip asking whether this was part of a Planning Pre-application, possibly for housing in the Anchor Rd/Brewery Lane field.

Enforcement – Mendip Enforcement reacted rapidly to the report of extensive groundworks being carried out to the west of Great House Farm at Leigh. Contact was made with the landowners who agreed to halt work pending the submission of a planning application.

10. Unitary update

Cllr Ham reported that there will be 4 planning area boards. North, South, East and West. Coleford will fall in the East which will have 13 members considering the applications. All bigger or more detailed planning applications, for example developments of more than 50 houses, quarries, industrial units etc will go to a strategic planning board.

There will be 110 unitary board members who all need to be trained by the end of the month. Licensing will be dealt with by one team for the whole area.

11. Update on the Community Review Project.

Libby Meyrick the chair of the Community Review team attended the meeting and gave the following report. The working party had been working over the last six months on the community review project with the support of SALC to develop the survey, ensuring the questions selected were relevant to Coleford. The survey was well publicized on social media, by a leaflet drop and by a meeting members of the public at different village groups. Residents then completed the survey online but help was given to ensure that everyone was able to take part. An open day was held at the Hub where people could come and complete the survey online with the support of volunteers.

The data was processed by SALC and the working party then started to give time to considering the information gleaned. A 57-page report which includes graphs and pictures has been compiled covering all the topics raised in survey. As a result of the report, an action plan has been put together. This has a dual purpose and shows that we have listened to those that took part in the survey and that we are considering the requests that have been made.

The next step is to help coordinate those actions. With the help of the parish council, existing village groups and potential new groups these actions can be tackled. First the action list needs to be considered to establish which can be completed, which are already done or underway, which might need funding. SALC will be able to identify funding opportunities available.

The working party do not feel that it is their place to finalize the list of actions. It was therefore agreed that a team of councillors would meet with Libby and the Clerk to take this forward.

Action: Arrange meeting date – Cllrs Bell, Ham, Moulding, Townsend and Paterson to attend

1. Discuss whether to host an event to showcase the groups active within the village

Mary Pearce attended and outlined that the Community Survey had highlighted that many people were unaware of what services and support groups are available in Coleford. The Big Help Out Day on Monday May 8th would be an opportunity to showcase what is available in Coleford.

The event had already been advertised on village notice boards and in the Coleford and Holcombe Community Magazine. Various people had already been invited including 'Crocks' and our PCSO Amanda Ware, Huckyduck Carnival and Coleford Athletic. Some groups have already confirmed that they will attend, namely Fun to Move, Knit and Natter, Thursday Coffee and Bingo., and the Flower Show committee.

The event will need a team of volunteers to ensure that the hall is set up and well publicised via social media, notice boards, village groups etc to ensure its success. It is predicted that costs would be a total £170. Hire for the Coleford British Legion for three hours approx. £120 and refreshments approx. £50. She asked if the council would be prepared to fund this event?

It was proposed by Cllr Ham and seconded by Cllr Pearce that a limit of £200 should be available to host the event.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Mary Pearce to help plan the event

2. Consider seeking volunteers to create a Coleford Climate and Environmental Group

It was agreed that Cllr Moulding and the Clerk would seek volunteers from the community to come together and discuss forming a Coleford climate and environmental group. The group would then lead on climate and environment topics, liaising with Council for advice and guidance

Action: Cllr Moulding & the Clerk to action

12. Discuss whether the bus service could be improved for Coleford residents

Cllr Ham and Cllr Paterson to discuss how this might be achieved.

Action: Cllr Ham and Cllr Paterson to action

13. Highways including:

1. Councillor update – Cllr Townsend did not attend but had emailed to say that he had met with Somerset Highways on the 14th February and had discussed the following items:

- Church St - dangerous water cover by Douglas Yates Court – reported by Highways to Bristol Water
- Stockhill – check for overhanging hedge, nothing apparent
- Mells Road – bridge parapet repair, in hand
- Drainage – raised highway appears to have resolved, Coleford PC to monitor.
- Charity Lane – Passing places now much more used with School expansion and several patches off the edge of the highway are seriously deep. To be filled by Highways.
- Dark Lane – main pothole north of Luckington Farm marked up. The worst sinking edges to be made up.
- Charmborough Lane – by Lipyeate House, blocked culvert cleared by landowner, 2 potholes marked up for repair. Eroded bank has been cleared back to the edge of the tarmac. This is now just over 4m wide.
- Brewery Lane – had been inspected last week and qualifying damage marked up at east end. Additional edge erosion by Brick House Farm marked up.
- Dark Lane – pothole north of stream already marked up.
- Common Lane – several patches identified and marked up.
- Ham – very rough around junction with Common Lane but no specific potholes. Several potholes identified by Ham Farm at edge of utility trench and marked up. Drainage work seems to have cleared the flooding issue by the bridge.

- Stoke Bottom - flooding much reduced by drainage work. Serious edge erosion east of bridge and towards Stoke Bottom Farm marked up. Old barrier and signage to be removed. Several other potholes marked up also edge erosion towards the west end. Flooding still an issue at Fairy Cave junction, drain to be cleared out. The whole of the Lane is scheduled for surface dressing in the summer, this will pick up other repairs required, marking up started.

The following items have subsequently been reported:

- Charmborough Lane – rough edges still unsatisfactory at the 2 pinch points opposite Lipyeate House.
- Anchor Rd – water cover manhole sunk/loose just south of upper pedestrian crossing.
- New Co-op – requested to hasten approval of new dropped kerb length to the right and reinstatement of original height to the left.
- Highbury St – pothole reported 50 yards down from the Eagle.
- Street Lights – good to see some activity. 2 as mentioned earlier are still not repaired.

The Clerk reported that three volunteers have now been trained to complete speed watch which will commence once the weather allows. Now that a group has formed the parish is eligible to apply for funding from Avon and Somerset Police towards a speed indicator device (SID). The Clerk will complete the application.

Action: Clerk to apply for SIS

2. Report of any new issues to be reported:
Hoares Lane has terrible edge erosion.

Action: Cllr Ham to report

14. Finance

1. Bank Reconciliation

The reconciliation had been prepared by the Clerk and will be checked by Cllr Bell prior to the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to action

2. Consider relocating the litter bin at the entrance to Preachers Vale

A Clerk explained that Idverde had been in touch to say that they would no longer empty the bin located at Preachers Vale. This was because their contractor slipped during a period of heavy rain whilst walking back over the small bund, to the truck causing injury to himself. The bin will not be emptied until it is either relocated close to the pavement or a track installed from the pavement to allow safe access.

The Clerk had received two quotes. It was proposed that the quote of £110 be submitted by Les Allen should be accepted.

Vote: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to notify the contractor

3. Consider quotes for removal of the ash tree and work on the beech tree at the allotment adjacent to the Coleford playing field

The Clerk asked that this be put back to the next meeting to allow a third quote to be received.

Action: Agenda item for the next meeting

4. Accounts approved for payments:
The following invoices were presented for payment:

HMRC - National Insurance	£122.02
V Watts - Clerks Expenses	£ 44.98
Philip Ham – Tree guards and plaques	£385.00
Somerset County Council – Pension deficit	£220.00

It was agreed that all payments should be made and that the cheques would be signed.

Vote: 8 For; 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

15. Update on the Allotments

1. Ratify the tenancy agreement

It was noted that Landlord had approved and submitted the Land Lease Agreement documentation for Council's signature. The landlord had added an Allotment licence (in appendix 1) for the Councils to use each time an Allotment licence was granted to an allotment holder. Before signing it was agreed that Cllr Ham and Cllr Pearce should cross reference the licence requirements with the NAS licence document that the Council had previously approved for use and make any necessary amendments.

It was agreed that if every thing in order Cllr Ham should sign the lease and accompanying statutory declaration using Mogers and Drewit Solicitors in Wells to assist.

Vote: 8 For; 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

*Action: Cllr Ham & Cllr Pearce to review the documents. Cllr Ham to sign the **Lease** and the statutory declaration.*

2. Agree how to promote the new allotments

It was agreed that the new allotments should be promoted on Facebook and in the parish magazine in order to compile a list of interested people.

Action: Clerk to promote

16. Consider whether to support the vote of no confidence in David Warburton proposed by Frome Town Council

It was agreed that this should not have been included as an agenda item.

17. Playing Fields and Play equipment

1. Consider quotes for disconnecting the electricity for the floodlights at the hardcourts

The Clerk explained that she had only received one quote to disconnect the electricity for the floodlights at the hardcourt.

The Clerk explained that over the last month the electricity supply at the changing rooms had failed 3 times on match days. National Grid have been out to address the problem but on the last occasion their contractor said that the system needed upgrading to a 3-phase supply. It was not understood why it was now failing when no electrical appliances had changed other than the installation of the smart meter.

Action: It was agreed that Cllr Drescher would approach other electricians for quotes and discuss the ongoing problem

2. Consider quote to repair the Youth Shelter at Highbury Playing Field

The Clerk had received a quote for £195 to fit rubber conveyor belt from the quarry to the side and roof of the youth shelter whilst it remains on site. It was proposed by Cllr Drescher and seconded by Cllr Ham that the quote should be accepted. The Clerk would ask the contractor to liaise with Cllr Ham so that the rubber can be cut to size before collecting

Action: Clerk to ask the contractor to call Cllr Ham with the required dimensions

3. Review the planning application and supporting documents for levelling of the playing field in order that it can be submitted to Mendip Planning Office to level the football pitch

The Clerk will contact Pennys and ask them to confirm the dimensions of the level platform as shown in the plans circulated, which includes the junior pitch, to ensure that there is sufficient room for a FA compliant pitch with level run off. If this is possible, then it was agreed that the Clerk should confirm the documents should be submitted to the planning department.

Action: Clerk to progress

- 18. Agree plans for the litter pick 11/03/23 at 10am**

Clerk to promote the event. Refreshments to be provided by the Council

Action: Clerk to promote, collect pickers, Hi viz and bags.

- 19. Discuss the advertising boards currently located at the corner of Highbury Playing Field**

The Clerk had circulated photographs of the advertising post which has rusted right through in places. It was agreed that the Clerk would research legislation relating to advertising to establish what could be installed if the existing post was to be removed.

Action: Clerk to research

- 20. Meetings to attend or attended**

Coleford Litter pick – 11/03/23 @ 10am at The Hub

- 21. Correspondence**

A Memorial application had been received from James Long (Masons) Ltd. The application was within the required specification and was duly approved.

Vote: 8 For; 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to notify the applicant

- 22. Matters of Urgency – at the Chairman’s Discretion**

The Councillors were pleased to see that the orchard at Coleford Playing field had been planted and thanks were given to the Coleford Conservation Group for taking the lead on the day. It was agreed that an order would be placed with Farm Forestry for 25 tree guards @ £5.56 totalling £139 + £24.99 delivery. The guards come with two stakes each, so there would be no extra purchasing costs. There would be 10 left as spares or for the allotment orchard when required.

Vote: 8 For; 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to place the order

- 23. Date of Next Meetings:**

22nd March 2023 Annual Meeting of the Parish & Planning meeting

12th April 2023 Parish Council meeting

The meeting finished at 21.30hrs