



Coleford Community Review 2022-23

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Coleford Community Plan survey which took place in late 2022 was the latest in a string of consultations with the residents of Parish of Coleford. There was a Parish-wide survey carried out in 2009 which set the future of developmental projects within Coleford for the following ten years. A number of projects, big and small, have come to fruition as a result of that survey. In 2020, a follow up survey of the community found that residents were in favour of a second comprehensive survey, to meet ongoing changes within the Parish, develop a shared vision of the future and create strategies for dealing with conservation and environmental challenges.

The brief survey of 2020 highlighted that topics of concern to the residents included lack of regular bus service, parking issues, litter, fouling, traffic and condition of the roads, and that residents would like to have a consensus on the way forward with regards to caring for and accessing the local countryside, support for people and the community and improving local services such as shops, healthcare and post office. As a result, this latest survey has included these topics.

A Steering Group made up of volunteers from the community, including a couple of Parish Council members and ably supported by the Clerk to the Parish Council was established, to work with SALC (The Somerset Association of Local Councils) on the project. This Community Plan survey was conducted 100% online – this method has environmental and cost benefits and helps with the speed and accuracy of the analysis of data collected

In order to enable as many people as possible to access the survey, much promotion was made across social media, Parish noticeboards and in local businesses including the village shop and the GP surgery. Workshops were held in community groups, an open day welcomed those who don't necessarily have access to the knowledge or equipment to access the internet.

The survey and subsequent analysis and report writing has been supported by the SALC – a full detailed report is available, along with an action plan, this document is a summary of the main findings of the survey.



Supported by



Findings

The results have now been analysed and a summary of the main findings follows:



Young People and Children

There are over 500 young people under the age of 19 living in Coleford, of which 183 completed the survey, which was the highest proportional response of any demographic for any question. The vast majority of responders thought that there was lack of information about activities appropriate for them in the Parish, or that nothing offered appealed to them or they weren't aware of what was on offer, this comment will be addressed by improved communication, about the services and facilities on offer. Those that responded did indicate that they use the various playing fields, community Hub and skate/bike park within the village but it is clear that greater communication regarding other facilities available to the younger people is needed, along with some investment of time and money to provide a wider range of engaging activities for our youth.



Community Facilities and Services

Although there are a number of activities offered in Coleford, the responses to these questions demonstrate that many responders are not aware of all the activities that are provided. A 'get involved' day would help to promote these existing activities and also gather volunteers from the community to lead on some new projects such as a Repair Shed and a Climate Action Group. Pop up information events to help individuals access various support networks could also be arranged for gatherings such as the Talking Café.



Use could be made of the various communication channels including the parent-teacher association (PTA) newsletter, village magazine, street notice boards and in the local shops and GP surgery, as well as social media.

With regards to facilities in the village, work such as improvements to existing tennis and multigame courts would be very expensive, but the Parish Council could undertake grant applications and fund raising to gradually upgrade the facility. Other recreational facilities, particularly for children and younger adults could be explored, including events arranged by external providers – such as virtual reality (VR) gaming sessions, laser clay pigeon shooting, zorbing, cinema screening, cookery classes and so on. Existing premises such as The Hub, the British Legion and the playing fields could be utilised for these activities which could help bring together a fairly disparate group of young people who attend a range of different schools and so don't naturally socialise together.

Finally, the provision of a café for use by the people of Coleford (of all ages) seems to be very much needed – this is a great commercial opportunity either for an existing business within Coleford, or for the establishment of a new business.



Traffic, travel and transport

Because of the scattered nature of the population within the Parish and the poor bus service, the vast majority of residents have access to a car, this leads to issues of speeding, parking shortages and road congestion due to parked cars. Suggestions to help with management of the traffic issues include a 20mph speed limit throughout the Parish, backed up by speed cameras and traffic calming measures. Alternatives to car use could be considered, such as lift sharing – linking to existing online services and maybe a commercial opportunity for a taxi firm to establish within the Parish as well as improved bus services.

The Parish Council could work with the local bus companies to establish a more regular, convenient service to enable residents to use a reliable service to travel to and from college and work – such as later and earlier buses. Information on lift sharing platforms can be made available to the residents via the regular newsletters and noticeboards and some traffic management options could be considered – these are covered more in the next section.



Community Safety

These questions were completed by the majority of responders, of which only four stated that they had no concerns regarding safety in Coleford. Response time for emergency vehicle services was a major concern, closely followed by traffic speed and lack of a police presence. Another area of concern was anti-social behaviour by other residents, with some suggestion of increasing activities for young people to help address this issue.

The introduction of traffic calming measures as also mentioned under 'Traffic, travel and transport' should help address concerns around traffic volume and speed, with the introduction of a Speedwatch group and speed indication devices also suggested. With regards to concerns about response times from emergency services, it is noted that there are two defibrillators within Coleford, but more training on these and in general first aid could be useful in empowering local people. It was also suggested that a volunteer for a 'first responder' within the Parish could be found. Some initiatives suggested in this section are already underway, for example the introduction of a Speedwatch group and provision of First Aider training by the GP surgery. Finally, with regards to activities for young people, in addition to that covered in the 'Community Facilities' section, use of holiday clubs, school space (out of school hours) and development of safe spaces have been suggested.





Health and Wellbeing

Most responders to the questions in this section are happy with the health service as provided, although some further assistance with navigating the new booking system at the surgery plus more face-to-face appointments are popular. Responders also called for provision of a dentist service within the Parish, and development of more holistic health care support, such as community exercise groups, gardening, and singing, as well as financial help for other prescribed activities such as gym membership and swimming (which, although prescribed for free, can be costly to get to).

Community led projects such as community gardening, park runs, singing groups and walking clubs, can be established and/or better promoted if already in existence. The Parish Council could start a conversation with the surgery regarding prescribed activities and whether or not funding could be sought to support those. The surgery could also hold sessions on guiding parishioners through the new system to access the facilities at the surgery.



Climate Emergency/Environmental Issues/Futureproofing

This was a very popular section of the survey with a high response rate, evidencing that this is an issue with which the community wishes to engage, in particular with larger projects associated with energy production, including solar, wind and geothermal options.

There is also a focus for guidance on how to make homes more energy efficient, which overlaps with the cost of living section, supporting interlinked outcomes which would benefit several parts of the community.

There is lots for the Parish Council to lead on here, but also much that can be community led – and there is the will within the residents to form a Community Group on Climate Action. The Parish Council could look at providing more allotments, committing to a Climate Action Plan and working with external bodies to provide information and signposting to get grants for projects such as home insulation. Signposting to community facilities such as the EV (Electric Vehicle) network and freecycle plus other relevant organisations for appropriate advice are quick wins, the Community should be able to lead on issues including forming a car share scheme, repair shed and local produce market (which could also be a commercial opportunity).





Cost of Living Crisis

Whilst the cost of living crisis is an issue very pertinent to when this survey was held (late 2022) it is worth noting that many of the issues raised in this section are of long term concern to many of the residents of Coleford – as a deprived area, many people living in the parish have long term issues relating to low income, which the actions arising from this section should help with.

One in eight responders reported that they are very affected by the cost of living crisis across all four categories – with only one sixth of residents reporting that the crisis is not affecting them at all. Overall, the majority of residents are impacted to some degree. Support such as help with home insulation, job creation, facilities such as a warm space, working hub, community café, fridge/freezer and pantry would all help with the issue, as well as bigger projects such as provision of mobile phone reception to the lower part of Coleford, as this will enable residents to install smart meters which will in turn lead to lower energy costs.

Signposting support services such as our Village Agent, Citizens Advice Mendip, Somerset Council Grants and other organisations that can provide support – such as identifying benefits for which residents could be eligible. Development and promotion of facilities such as warm space, foodbank, community pantry and work with mobile phone providers to help with coverage in the village. Finally, the bigger picture issues such as job creation and particularly encouraging social housing development in the Parish can be tackled, with the support of local residents.



Summary

There is a theme of main topics which have lots of support within the report: Environmental projects such as insulation for homes, solar projects, protection of nature and green spaces, reduction in litter and air pollution, and provision of EV charging points all have strong support across this survey. Many of these are also linked to help with the cost of living crisis. It is clear that responders are also keen to have a stronger sense of community in the Parish, with support for groups and activities which bring people together.

There are some highlights which the Parish Council may be able to develop, or are already working on, these including:

- Access to grant funding for insulation/solar power projects
- Improvements to bus services
- Litter picking education
- Warm bank
- EV points
- Traffic speed management
- Conversations relating to social housing

The survey also calls for development of some big projects, which could be used as evidence in bids for funding, such as: Community solar project; Community building development and Community wind turbine.

Some of the projects called for within the survey could be developed and led by the wider community (not necessarily the Parish Council). These include:

- 'Shed' facility for meeting and working on practical initiatives
- LGBTQ group
- Gardening club
- Walking club
- Inclusive activities for various groups – teenagers, parents with toddlers, people with disabilities
- Climate Action group

The survey also highlighted a need for much better communication about what is already available in the village, as many responders seemed to be unaware that facilities including the nursery/pre school, youth club, foodbank and lunch clubs already exist. This need for better communication can be shared with groups and organisations to help them spread the word about the services they offer and to encourage others to get involved. Finally, the survey shows support for some commercial opportunities which could attract new business opportunities (and employment) to the Parish, and/or could be exploited by existing businesses. The most popular of these would be a café, but also include a veterinary service, a takeaway, a dog exercise field and a regular market for produce and crafts.

Please note that not all suggestions made in the survey are included in this summary. For a comprehensive view of all the suggestions and actions (more than 90 actions in total) please see the separate Action Plan document produced by the steering group.

Way forward

The volunteer steering group who have managed this project so far are now handing the reins to the Parish Council for them to oversee the progression of the actions identified in this survey. At the time of writing this summary, a number of actions have already been taken on board and completed, these include:

- Maintenance of the bike/skate track
- Planting of community orchard
- Introduction of a Speedwatch group
- Provision of First Aid training
- Liaising with GP surgery regarding increased face to face appointments and helping residents with online booking system
- Promotion of existing running club and walking group

Many of the other actions have already been taken on board by the Parish Council and other Community bodies and are under development, covering a huge range of topics from an event to promote and encourage engagement in the wide range of groups and clubs in the Parish to provision of more allotments and liaising with local bus companies to improve the service to the village. As of April 2023, 24 of the actions are in the 'progressing' category.

Of the other areas not yet actioned, some will require funding, which the Parish Council will look at, and some will require volunteers from the community to lead – the event to promote activities within Coleford and ongoing communications in this area will lead to engagement with members of the community who have the relevant interests and skills to help progress these areas.

Conclusion

This has been a thorough, extensive project which has engaged a large section of the community in Coleford, identifying a number of areas of concern to the residents, as well as some really great ideas for the development of the village and surrounding areas. The steering group are grateful to those who have engaged with the process and continue to offer time, expertise and support for many of the action areas. The group also thank the SMART Team at Community Council for Rural Somerset for their guidance and input to the process and to the Parish Council who entrusted the group with this project – and now face the task of taking on the actions and making as many of them a reality as possible.



Privacy Statement

Analysis will be conducted by Smart Communities Ltd part of Community Council for Somerset (CCS) Group. Data is captured for legitimate and contractual purposes. Information is collected and analysed in accordance with Smart Communities Ltd role as a Data Controller and Data Processor. Hard copies of consultation surveys are kept for the duration of the consultation period and destroyed after the final report is signed off by the commissioner of the survey.

Coleford Community Plan steering group will enter any paper copies using standard proprietary online survey software and sign a nondisclosure agreement to protect your personal data. Or Coleford Community Plan steering group will not be handling paper surveys these are being entered by an independent data entry service with no direct connections with the community and who will be bound by contract to not disclose any personal details. Once entered all paper copies will be destroyed.

Digital copies are retained for 12 months and deleted after this period. Any personal data that is captured is anonymised with the report and held securely for the purposes of analysis.

No data will be published which can identify an individual without their consent. If you have provided contact details to offer help this data is shared with the Coleford Community Plan steering group. If you have only entered your details to take part in the prize draw and you win, your data is shared with the Coleford Community Plan steering group. If you would like to find out more about how we use your data or want to see a copy of the information about you that we hold, please contact info@somersetccc.org.uk or call 01823 331222. Protecting your Personal Data is important and we fully comply and adhere to the Principles of Data Protection set out in our Data Protection / Privacy Policy visit: ccslovesomerset.org/smart-communities-ltd-policies/

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