

Parish Council of Coleford

Gallant Hill Farm, Foxcote, Radstock, BA3 5YB
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Newsletter for November 2023

Planning

2023/2106/HSE - Proposed side extensions and loft conversion with dormers
Hovan Bungalow Harris Vale Coleford
Coleford Parish Council recommended approval as the extension did not breach planning reasons.



Small Grant Awards

The Parish Council were pleased to be able to make the following awards supporting local groups and clubs in the village

Name of Group	Description	Amount awarded
@ The Hub	Hot water for the bathrooms	£500.00
Huckyduck Carnival Club	Mitre Saw	£60.00
Coleford Climate Action Group	1st year set up costs for a website (Hosting & Domain registration)	£120.00
Tuesday Afternoon Club	Grant to go towards guest speakers, hall hire and visits	£300.00
Coleford Conservation Volunteers	Restock planters at Church Street Garden	£50.00
1st Coleford Scout Group	Insulation for the kitchen	£350.00
Knit & Natter	Balls of yarn	£50.00
Coleford Theatre Group	Pyrotechnic machine and new microphones plus costumes as have had to hire	£500.00
	Total	£1,930.00

Emergency Planning



As much as we may like to think that Coleford would not be subjected to an emergency situation, with extreme weather situations it could happen. The Parish Council is therefore starting to put together an Emergency Plan for the village which will provide guidance and key contact numbers etc in the event of an unexpected incident. @ The Hub Committee are also looking at registering the building as a 'Safe Place' with Somerset Prepared. We will keep you up to date with the progress we make on this.

Highways

During the last month:

- Bristol Water responded quickly to the request for urgent action on safety hazard caused by the water cover on the pavement outside the Temperance Hall, which had flipped up.
- The inconsistencies of the 20mph signage by the school have been pointed out to Somerset Highways. Response awaited.

The following new issues have been reported to Somerset Highways:

- Potholes/edge erosion developing at the Anchor Rd turn into Brewery Lane then up the nearside of Brewery Lane.
- Issues in neighbouring parishes, i.e., Mells and Holcombe. Edge erosion on the road between the Allotments and Vobster Cross, and in the middle of the road in Holcombe just beyond the playing field car park entrance.
- It was asked if there was any update on whether the footpath between Mendip Vale and Farley Dell could be improved. Both Somerset Rights of Way and Somerset Highways said that it was not part of their responsibility. It was asked who installed the safety barriers on the path? It was agreed that photos of the path would be sent to the Clerk who would follow this up with Somerset Council and Rights of Way.



Date of Next Meetings:

22nd November 2023 – Planning meeting

13th December 2023 - Parish Council meeting

If you have any issues that you would like to bring to the Parish Council's attention, please contact the Clerk on 07971 516916 or email clerk@colefordpc.org.uk Check out the website www.colefordpc.org.uk

Philip Ham

Somerset Council

Somerset Cllr Philip Ham gave the following report:



2023/4 Financial Position: As at the end of Month5 (September 2023) Somerset Council predicts an end of year overspend of £27.3 million including £14.9m in Adult's and £12m in Children's. Although these figures may be reduced the accepted position is that the budget cannot be achieved, and reserves will have to be used to plug the gap.

2024/5 Financial Position: The current expected budget gap for next year is £100m which represents 20% of the total budget. Of these over £70m is within Social Care. This situation has been described by the Finance Director as being 'stark and challenging'. He wrote to the Government in September setting out the dire straight of the Council budget if no changes are made. With General Reserves at £48.9m some of which will be needed to plug 2023/24 then there is insufficient cover to meet the £100m shortfall. As a consequence, and unless something drastic changes then a Section 114 notice will be issued. Whilst the Government may allow some capitalisation of revenue costs this will be at an additional 1% above loan rate and will require a comprehensive and approved plan for the future.

What has gone wrong?: The loss of momentum, expertise and focus after the election in delivering the Unitary transformation by the new administration, has meant that costs have not been removed and duplication of roles continues. As of 1st October, of the 330 planned redundancies 29 have been announced and significant numbers of employees remain on interim contracts. In addition, rising costs in Adults and Children's Social Care plus the lack of delivery on cost savings planned as part of the budget means that a s114 is looking more and more likely.

What is a Section 114: Somerset Council is required by law to have balanced budgets – this means the council's income has to match its projected spending. If the council cannot find a way to finance its budget, then a section 114 notice must be issued. The issuing of a section 114 notice prohibits all new spending with the exception of protecting:

- vulnerable people

- statutory services (although some are left vague in definition)
- pre-existing spending commitments

If a section 114 notice is issued, it means Somerset Council has to stop spending, and cannot enter into new agreements. However, all existing grant agreements will be honoured, and care packages will continue to be paid. Once a section 114 notice is issued, Somerset would have 21 days from the date of the notice to hold a meeting to consider the section 114 report, decide if it agrees with the views contained in the report, and what action to take in consequence of it. A final step would be the appointment by Government of 3 Commissioners at an annual cost of approx. £1m.

New and Expectant Parents Policy: The Councils updated New and Expectant Parents Policy (HS17) has attracted considerable national attention by deleting any reference to mothers. In a statement the Council advised that it was changed to ‘be inclusive for all employees who are pregnant, have given birth in the last 6 months and those breastfeeding including transgender or non-binary people’.

Highways Contract: Somerset Council has signed a new eight-year contract with Kier Transportation Ltd to deliver core maintenance across its road network. The £225m agreement covers key maintenance works – including road repairs, drainage, verge cutting and winter service, such as gritting and other emergency functions in adverse weather. The current contract with Milestone Infrastructure comes to an end at the end of March 2024. Three other multi-million-pound contracts covering resurfacing, surface dressing, and new assets will also be awarded in due course.

Demolition work at Priorswood recycling centre: Demolition work has started on the Taunton Recycling site following the major fire which has closed the site since early October. The Material Recovery Facility (MRF) adjacent to the public recycling area is beyond repair and the recycling site is not safe to open until it is demolished. It is not yet known how long it will take to complete the demolition, but it is likely to be up to two weeks. The site in Priorswood will remain closed until demolition is complete.

Recycling: Nearly half the content of the average Somerset bin could have been recycled, Somerset Council revealed. The 48% figure found this year is an impressive 11% decrease on 2018 – the last time the ‘composition analysis’ was carried out in the county. The contents of some 550 households refuse bins were emptied, sorted and weighed, with a representation from across the county. Of the contents that should have been recycled:

- 14% recyclable at the kerbside (e.g. cardboard or drinks cans)
- 21% food waste, recyclable in the food waste bin
- 7% garden waste and pet bedding
- 7% recyclable at a recycling site (e.g. wood and metal)

The 11% reduction on 2018 figure is thought to have been driven by the expanded Recycle More collections, with less plastic pots tubs and trays being put in the refuse.

Somerset Gritters: Somerset’s fleet of 23 gritters are ready to be mobilised across 900 miles of road as soon as the temperature drops below zero this winter. Last year the gritter fleet went out on 67 occasions when freezing temperatures were forecast.