

Parish Council of Coleford

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held Wednesday 13th March 2024

Present Cllr Ham, (Chairman presiding) Banks, Bell, Evans, Moulding, Paterson and Townsend

In attendance 2 members of the public present
The Clerk, Vickie Watts taking the minutes

1. Public Forum

1.1 A member of the public reported that the Planning Inspectorate had approved several planning applications for developments (across the area but not necessarily in Somerset) at the appeal stage which is disappointing.

1.2 A resident had complained that the tree located in Roman Way playground is dropping twigs onto their land.

Action: Clerk to investigate.

2. Apologies for Absence (acceptance of any reasons offered)

Cllr Allen, Barrett, Drescher, Douglas-Burke, Pearce and West had sent apologies which were accepted by the Chair.

3. Declaration of Interest and Dispensations granted since last meeting

Cllr Banks declared an interest in the planning application ref 2024/0310/VRC

4. Review Footpath report (North)

The Footpath officer for the North of the village attended the meeting and explained that he had walked all of the paths and had reported any issues as they had been found on to the Rights of Way (RoW) interactive map. There were issues on footpaths FR4/10 & FR4/34 which had been reported several years ago to Somerset RoW, which were still outstanding. The Clerk agreed to follow up with the RoW officer.

It was agreed that the community payback team would be asked to help clear the fallen trees which were blocking the footpath FR 4/34 near the Newbury works.

Action: Clerk to forward a copy to Somerset RoW and press for action on the longstanding issues.

5. Approve the minutes from the meeting held on 14th and 28th February 2024

The Clerk had circulated the minutes to all Councillors prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Bell and seconded by Cllr Paterson that the minutes accurately reflected the meetings and should be sign by the Chair.

Vote 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to upload to the website

6. Actions arising from the minutes

All actions had been completed or would feature later in the agenda 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

- Cllr Allen, Douglas-Burke and West would complete the template and bring back to the January meeting.

Action: Agenda item for April

- The Clerk stated that both Somerset Rights of Way and Somerset Highways have confirmed that they did not install the safety barriers on the footpath between Mendip Vale and Farley Dell. It was agreed that Cllr Allen would prepare a specification of works so that quotes could be sought to lay tarmac and grant funding

Action: Cllr Allen to prepare a specification of work to tarmac the path

- The Clerk confirmed that the memorial inspection was due to be completed which would be an opportunity to undertake a thorough inspections of the cemetery. The Clerk will agree a date for the working party to meet and conduct the inspection.

Action: Agenda item for a future meeting.

- **Review Cemetery rules**
Clerk to complete the review.

Action: Agenda item for the May meeting

- **Discuss prospect of having a Christmas Tree for December 2024**
Cllr Allen explained that the management team at the Royal British Legion might be receptive to having a temporary Christmas Tree located on the lawn outside the building.

Action: Clerk to follow up on letter sent to RBL and source lights for the appropriately sized tree.

- It was noted that the grit bin at Careys Mead had been damaged.

Action: Clerk to investigate

- Consider applying for Health & Wellbeing grant from Somerset Association of Local Councils

Initial discussion has revealed that the following projects could be incorporated:

- Creation of accessible beds and compost toilet
- Creation of shelter from the existing container to allow workshops to take place
- Mindfulness sessions
- Cookery classes to promote healthy eating incorporating using home grown produce
- Creation of a Men Shed group

All Councillors agreed that an application for £35K should be developed with the support of SALC

Actions: The Clerk to work on the application.

- Update on Coleford allotments

It was agreed that a working party meeting was required to discuss the installation of further water stations, water supply for the orchard and to review whether there are other issues that need to be addressed.

Action: Clerk to liaise with working party suitable date to meet

7. Reports

7.1 Somerset Council - Somerset Councillors Philip Ham and Barry Clarke circulated the following report:

2024/5 Council Budget: Somerset Council has voted through plans to set a budget for the coming financial year but received a stark warning of significant challenges in the years ahead. LibDem Council Members unanimously agreed a range of measures to bridge a funding gap of £100m for 2024/25, including cost cuttings, increasing Council Tax by 5%, and using £36.8 millions of reserves (a council's equivalent of savings). The proposals also include a 'capitalisation direction' request of £36.9m – seeking permission from Government to borrow money or sell assets to pay for day-to-day running costs. Amid specific plans to cut costs and increase fees, around 1,200 jobs are expected to go at Somerset Council over the next three years equivalent to about a quarter of the workforce. As a result of the cuts some Town Councils have stepped in to save services (CCTV, public toilets etc) but this has resulted in a 179% council tax increase in Taunton, 90% in Yeovil and 164% in Bridgwater.

Council papers are still predicting a further £103 million budget gap in 2025/26.

Gigafactory plans for Puriton site: Agratas, a new business within the Tata Group, has confirmed its plans to build a gigafactory producing EV batteries at the Gravity Smart Campus site in Puriton, near Bridgwater. A £4 billion investment, the factory will create up to 4,000 jobs and many more as part of the supply chain. It is envisioned that the plant will be operational in the second half of the decade, eventually producing 40GWh of battery cells annually, enough to supply approximately 500,000 passenger vehicles. Once fully operational, the factory is set to be Britain's biggest battery factory, and one of the largest in Europe. Over the next five years, Somerset Council plans to invest in the infrastructure, skills, site access and connectivity which will be paid for by the Business Rates generated by the factory once it is operational.

Under the surface exhibition: 'Under the Surface' is an exhibition of photographs by renowned Somerset-based photographer Matilda Temperley, reflecting on 10 years since the devastating floods of 2013-14. It is on display at Somerset Rural Life Museum, Glastonbury from Saturday 2 March to Sunday 19 May. Alongside the exhibition, a programme of events and activities will take place supported by Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). These include family activities during the Easter Holidays, run in collaboration with the RSPCA and Somerset Wildlife Trust, where visitors can take part in climate-themed craft activities.

Healthy Somerset: A new website has been launched by Public Health to help people in Somerset lead a healthier life. The new site – www.healthysomerset.co.uk – features health and wellbeing resources tailored to all age ranges – making it even easier for users to find the information and support they are looking for. The new refreshed layout of the site breaks down services and support to represent the ages and stages of life from the 'best start in life' (0-5 yrs), through to 'starting well' (5-18 yrs), to 'living well' (18-65 yrs) and 'ageing well' (65+). To view the website and be empowered on your journey to a healthier lifestyle, visit: <https://bit.ly/healthy-somerset>.

Chard Enterprise Centre: The new Chard Enterprise centre, offers flexible office and light industrial workspace to support small and medium enterprises. Costing £4.2m the Enterprise Centre has been made possible after successfully securing £1.7m funding from the European Regional Development Fund. Chard Enterprise Centre forms part of a network of workspace

services offered by Somerset Council. The Enterprise Centre network aims to offer quality workspace and business support in areas where commercial providers do not operate. There are currently 10 sites across the county and, in addition to Chard, there are centres in Highbridge, Dulverton, Wheddon Cross, Frome, Minehead, Wells, Williton, Wiveliscombe and Bruton.

Take the Pressure Off: Over half of all strokes and heart attacks in Somerset are caused by high blood pressure. Known as the silent killer, high blood pressure is quick and simple to diagnose and to treat. NHS Somerset, together with Somerset Council is launching their biggest ever campaign ‘Take the Pressure Off’ with the aim of testing thousands of residents to increase awareness and early detection of high blood pressure. The “Take the Pressure Off” campaign is designed to encourage residents, particularly those aged 40+, to regularly check their blood pressure and take necessary steps towards managing their health. In addition to workplace testing, the campaign will be partnering with local sports clubs to help raise awareness of the risks of high blood pressure, particularly to males and those who identify as male, across Somerset. Residents are also encouraged to borrow a free blood pressure monitor from their library to test their own blood pressure in the comfort of their home, or visit their local pharmacy for a quick and easy check.

Portrait of His Majesty the King: The government is offering a free framed portrait of His Majesty The King to all town, parish and community councils in the United Kingdom from 12 February. The Clerk confirmed that she had placed an order for the Village Hall.

- 7.2 PCSO - A report had been circulated which stated that there had been 3 incidents of arson and criminal damage and 1 case of miscellaneous crimes against society.

8. **Planning Applications**

- 8.1 2024/0310/VRC - Variation of condition 2 (drawings) of permission Reference Number 2022/0854/FUL (Erection of dwelling house.) Land South Of 62 Mendip Vale Coleford Frome Somerset

All Councillors had considered the plans prior to the meeting. After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Townsend and seconded by Cllr Paterson that the decision should be left with the planning officer to satisfy the structural aspect re the West boundary.

Vote: 5 For.0 Against, 2 Abstentions (1 Somerset Councillor)

Action: Clerk to notify the planning officer

- 8.2 2024/0305/LBC - Rebuilding of partially damaged entrance wall and pier Newbury Manor School Tinkers Lane Newbury Frome Somerset

All Councillors had considered the plans prior to the meeting. After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Bell and seconded by Cllr Paterson that the decision should be left with the listed building officer

Vote: 6 For.0 Against, 1 Abstentions (1 Somerset Councillor)

Action: Clerk to notify the planning officer

9. **Planning updates including enforcement issues**

The Clerk to present updated records at the next meeting

Action: Clerk to update – Agenda item for the next meeting

10. Consider response to the Public Consultation on Local Plan Part II

A draft response had been circulated to all Councillors for consideration. It was agreed that as the deadline for submission was not until 12th April this would be an agenda item for the next meeting to allow amendments if required.

Action: Agenda item for April

11. Highways including:

11.1 Councillor update – The following items have been reported to Highways:

- Hippy Lane - drains
- Dark Lane - potholes
- Brewery Lane - edge erosion, good to see sunken covers being sorted Charlton Rd - sunken drain by Hackmead Farm Charmborough Lane - sunken drain as you turn off Charlton Rd Stockhill - pothole on left before 30mph sign coming into village 20mph lights not flashing - reported to Sara Davis the Somerset Highways Engineer.

11.2 Report of any new issues to be reported – A Councillor highlighted concern over the state of Charity Lane, which has many potholes and edge erosion. The students and support workers from the local Special Educational Needs school use the road as part of the school timetable and there is a concern that there could be an accident.

It was reiterated that any problems with the roads should be reported. If a claim was submitted for a longstanding issue the Council might contest on the grounds that the issue had not been reported.

Action: Clerk to encourage all parishioners to report road issues via the Somerset Council website.

11.3 Update on Local Community Network (LCN) Highways sub group meeting – Cllr Ham said that the 1st LCN Highway sub group meeting was a success with the Terms of reference being agreed and signed off at the LCN meeting held on the 11th March. The group will meet quarterly and it has been agreed that a member of Somerset Highways will attend to provide expert knowledge as and when required.

Various options are being suggested to address the Somerset Council financial emergency. Councils can sign up to be part of the Highway Steward scheme whereby a trained person will be able to complete verge maintenance, sign clearing etc. The cost of employing the steward would be approx. £60K which would be split between the councils wanting to use the service. Other options include Somerset Council providing training for Councils own staff or Councils buying services back from Somerset Highways. A price list will be provided in due course. It was agreed that those attending the Highways sub group meeting would report back and the Parish Council would monitor before 2025/26 when the budget reductions will become enforced.

Cllr Ham reported that all of the LCN Chairperson's had recently met at Somerton for an opportunity to discuss how things had been progressing since setting up. It was apparent that Highways was a top priority to all Councils.

11.4 Consider Highway Maintenance Devolution – Options for local enhancement to routine highways maintenance services – As mentioned above, Council to monitor for the time being.

12. Finance

12.1 Agree Bank Reconciliation – Cllr Bell checked the bank reconciliation and signed it as accurate.

12.2 Update on the Health & Wellbeing grant application – Cllr Ham confirmed that he had discussed the application with other village groups but more work is required to pull the information together ready for submission.

12.3 Council to agree and Chair to sign PATA payroll details – It was agreed that Cllr Ham would complete the form with the Clerk and sign at the end of the meeting

Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

12.4 Chair to sign grass cutting contract for 2024-26 – The Clerk confirmed that the contractor had now signed the contract as agreed at an earlier meeting. All agreed that the contract would be signed by the Chair and the current standing order would be amended to reflect the agreed amount ready for the first payment on 20th April 2024

Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to amend the standing order

12.5 Consider & agree quote for timber treatment & paint for payback projects – It was agreed that Cllr Evans would purchase the required equipment for the payback team to treat the timber play equipment as soon as the weather allowed. Cllr Ham to purchase child friendly timber treatment.

Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Cllr Ham and Cllr Evans to purchase materials for payback team

12.6 Accounts approved for payments:
The following invoices were presented for payment:

HMRC - National Insurance	£148.53
V Watts - Clerks Expenses	£ 45.75
Nippers Tippers _ Removal of waste bin	£ 25.00
Glasdon UK – Dog waste bags	£ 65.64
LSJ Gardening – Grass cutting VAT element only	£233.33
Paul Gilson – Footpath Warden (North)	£ 50.00
Read Agri services – Rainwater harvesting materials	£105.41

It was proposed by Cllr Paterson and seconded by Cllr Bell that the payments should be approved.

Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

13. Update on Allotments

To include discussion on provision of toilet facilities (Consider quotes received for a portalo) Cllr Ham explained that he had written a strongly worded letter regarding the proposed conditions on the planning application for the allotment car park and suggested that the parish Council supplies a construction plan to satisfy the Planning officer. All Councillors supported the proposal.

Action: Cllr Townsend to send construction plan

Cllr Ham has spoken with the Quarry who have agreed to supply the material for the car park and will deliver at no cost.

It was proposed that whilst waiting to hear back on grant applications, it might be sensible to purchase a portaloo unit and pay to have a professional company in to clean and empty it rather than renting.

Action: Cllr Bell to approach his neighbour to establish if they will sell once their project is complete.

The Coleford Conservation Volunteers have considered the site offered by the council for the tree nursery project. Having considered the site, they have requested a path near to the organic plot E12. Before agreeing the clerk to ask how big the trees will get before being removed.

Action: Clerk to establish how tall the trees will become before being relocated / sold to those requiring new trees.

14. Update on the Emergency Plan for Coleford

No update received from the working party.

Action: Agenda item for April

15. Consider request to create a community herb garden at Beacon View

The member of the public has not yet considered the site.

Action: Agenda item for April

16. Meetings to attend or attended

13/03/24 – Climate and Environmental Forum. Attended by Cllr Moulding.

17/03/24 @ 10am – Village Litter pick

27/03/24 @ 7.30pm – Annual meeting of the Parish

Action: Clerk to promote both Parish events

17. Correspondence

11/03/24 – Email received asking if the Council intended to purchase the small wood owned by Somerset Council near 26 Mendip Vale.

Action: Clerk to notify the resident that at this stage there is no intention to purchase the woodland.

10/03/24 – Letter received seeking the support of the Parish Council to renovate the Amulet theatre in Shepton Mallet to make it a building which can be used as a community building.

Action: Clerk to write a letter of support

18. Matters of Urgency – at the Chairman’s Discretion

There were none.

19. Date of Next Meetings:

27th March 2024

Annual Meeting of the Parish & Planning meeting

10th April 2024

Parish Council meeting

The meeting ended at 21.30hrs