

Parish Council of Coleford

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held Wednesday 8th May 2024

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

In attendance No members of the public present
The Clerk, Vickie Watts taking the minutes

1. Public Forum

1.1 It was reported that the drains were blocked outside 31 Alfords Ridge.

Action: Cllr Townsend to report

1.2 A complaint received about the birch tree in Roman Way which is dropping twigs onto neighbouring garden. The Clerk confirmed that she had looked at the tree and could see no issue but would request a second opinion.

Action: Clerk to arrange for Cllr Barrett to investigate

1.3 Repairs have taken place on Tinkers Lane. Somerset Highways contractors have indicated that the ditch needs to be cleared to prevent future flooding but there is dispute over who is responsible for the work.

Action: Cllr Townsend to progress

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

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

3. Declaration of Interest and Dispensations granted since last meeting

There were none.

4. Approve the minutes from the meeting held on 10th April 2024

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

Vote 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to upload to the website

5. 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 has sought specification and quotes to improve the footpath between Mendip Vale and Farley Dell.

Action: Agenda item once the information has been received

- 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 after the inspection has been completed.

Action: Agenda item for a future meeting

- **Discuss prospect of having a Christmas Tree for December 2024**
The Clerk has sent a letter and email to the management team at the Royal British Legion asking if they might be receptive to having a temporary Christmas Tree located on the lawn outside the building.

Action: Clerk to chase up

6. Reports

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

Suez waste collection contract: The Council's waste contractor, SUEZ, has disclosed figures showing significant annual losses on its £24m a year contract. It has made a number of contractual claims seeking adjustment to payment and while these are in dispute, without an increase in payments there is a risk that SUEZ may exit the contract, to limit its losses over the contract's remaining six years. A report to the Council's Executive Committee meeting recommends giving the Council's Chief Executive a mandate to negotiate with SUEZ to broker a deal which would stop SUEZ exiting the contract. The ongoing rerouting of collections is helping make rounds more efficient and as cost effective as possible, but even with this SUEZ considers the contract unviable.

Revised waste collection routes: Recycling and rubbish collection days are changing for 92,000 households in eastern parts of the county in June following changes made to the rest of the county earlier this year. From Monday June 17th, new collection routes are being introduced for many homes in the former South Somerset and Mendip districts. The new routes will make rounds more efficient, more manageable for crews while reducing mileage and carbon emissions. The changes come at no additional cost to the council.

Roadside grass-cutting: From May 2024, where safe to do so, mowing routines across managed highway verges, open spaces, country parks and council property grounds will be reduced although safety and visibility around verges and public spaces such as play areas will be cut more regularly. On wider verges, only a 1-meter swathe is mowed, leaving the rest untouched to maintain biodiversity. Further information on the cutting schedule can be found at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/grass-cutting/>

Subsidised Bus Fares in Taunton: Somerset Council has announced revised bus fares for the Taunton Town Zone to keep services sustainable. From 1 June this will be £1.50 for any adult single fare and 80p for a child. The new fares will be reviewed at the end of this year. Across the rest of the county the cost for any single fare will stay at £2 until December 2024, part of the national Government-funded initiative. The fare for the Park and Ride service in Taunton remains £1 for a single fare.

Children and Young Peoples Plan : The new Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) for Somerset sets out the Council’s aims for 2024-2030 including how services and communities are accountable for children and young people and how they will work together to ensure the ambitions of the plan are achieved. Members of Somerset Youth Forum have suggested that the most important priorities are:

- Having a better experience in education
- Leading healthier lives
- Help to improve your mental health
- Living in safer communities
- Building better relationships
- Being prepared for adulthood

The Council wants to encourage all individuals under the age of 25 to share their thoughts on these priorities via the online survey: <https://forms.office.com/e/dNHr44HCfn>

Volunteer Drivers: Since Covid-19 the numbers of volunteer drivers in Somerset has reduced by about 67 per cent. These dedicated drivers play a pivotal role in the community, providing essential transportation services to residents so the Council are calling out for new volunteers. Many residents who need the service live in rural areas with little or no access to public transport and are unable to drive. If you are working part-time, a parent, retired or just have some spare time on your hands and you have a car and at least half a day to a day to offer then you can get involved and make a positive impact on people’s lives. Volunteer drivers receive training and are reimbursed expenses at 45p per mile (or 50p per mile with passengers).

6.2 PCSO – No report had been received.

6.3 Coleford Climate Action Group (CCA) – Cllr Moulding confirmed that the CCA had successfully received a grant of £4470.00 from the Rural Communities Energy Support Fund. The money will be used to:

1. Develop a pop-up banner
2. Purchase kit for display at events
3. Energy packs to give out to people (25 energy packs) and hopefully chimney balloons to stop draughts and prevent warm air leaving via the chimney.

7. **Planning Applications**

There were none.

8. **Planning updates including enforcement issues**

8.1 It was noted that Somerset Highways had responded to the Rainier application saying that there were no previous accidents recorded but that has been challenged by Somerset Cllr Ham. It is important that they visit the site to witness first-hand the nature of the roads.

The planning officer confirmed that they had received the letter from the Parish Council which confirmed that Avon and Somerset Policy have verified that the accident data which Somerset Highways are referring for planning applications, is inaccurate. He also confirmed that there are several documents which need updating including the travel plan.

It was agreed that the Clerk would send a letter to Somerset Highways executive member Mr Wilkins asking for a meeting in Coleford, so that the issues with Coleford roads and how decisions are made by Somerset Highways when responding to planning applications, can be discussed.

Action: Clerk to send letter to Somerset Highways.

8.2 2024/0310/VRC – Variation of condition 2 (drawings) of permission 2022/0854/FUL (Erection of dwelling house0 – Land South of 62 Mendip Vale, Coleford, Radstock

Approved by Somerset Council

8.3 2023/0492//FUL – Leveling of Highbury Playing Field.

The Clerk reported that Pennys have sent an email confirming that they are currently working on discharging the 3 planning conditions which formed part of the planning permission. They have received a quote for the surface water drainage system and have instructed them to proceed. They confirmed they will be in touch to discuss timescales etc in near future.

Action: Clerk to press Pennys for indication on when work may start.

Cllr Moulding left the meeting

9. Decide on whether Coleford Parish Council should accept the invitation to join the Holcombe Planning and Development group

Cllr Townsend attended the first meeting of the Holcombe Planning and Development group and reported that they had discussed whether there would be any benefit in creating a neighbourhood plan. They were currently trying to establish if there would be any material benefit to the parish if there was one in place.

It was proposed by Cllr Ham and seconded by Cllr Banks that Cllr Townsend should attend and keep the Council updated of any progress.

Action: Cllr Townsend to attend

10. Highways including:

10.1 Councilor update – The following report had been submitted by Cllr Townsend:

- Anchor Rd/Brewery Lane - the patching work done is just that, patches only, only done half the job and nothing on the left along Brewery Lane.

Action: Cllr Townsend to lodge a formal complaint.

- Stockhill - defects reported and minimal patching done.
- Charity Lane - defects in front of Newbury House reported
- Cherry Gardens Lane - pothole reported and filled. Surface breaking up again just north of Lipyeate Farmhouse.
- Charmborough Lane - pothole reported by entrance to Hill Farm
- Springers Hill - overhanging tree and surface erosion reported.

10.2 Report of any new issues to be reported –

1. The surface on Vobster Hill has deteriorated to the extent that it is difficult to cycle up.
2. The trees adjacent to Preachers Vale green need to be cut back by Somerset Council

Action: Cllr Townsend to report

11. Update on Allotments

11.1 Update on installation of the car park

Hansons provided 200 tonnes of stone which included being delivered free of charge to create the parking area. The contractors had some issues but the car park is now complete. It was agreed that a letter of thanks would be sent to Hansons thanking them for their generous donation to include photographs of the car park.

Action: Clerk to draft thank you letter

There are 3 further loads of stone to be supplied and delivered by Hansons for installation of the toilet, path and sumps which will hopefully be completed by the end of May. Cllr Ham to manage the co-ordination of the project.

Cllr Ham said he had asked a local farmer to deliver some manure to the site at the earliest opportunity.

11.2 Agree purchase of compostable toilet for the allotments

After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Pearce and seconded by Cllr Bell that the Woo-Woo accessible cabin, starter pack compostable toilet and urinal should be purchased at a cost of £5,389.17 plus VAT. This doesn't include installation. It is acknowledged that a total of £1,829.17 would need to come from the Climate Fund. It is hoped that the volunteers will help to create build the cabin and install the toilet & urinal.

Vote 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to progress with placing the order and sourcing competent volunteers.

11.3 Agree installation of additional water points

After discussion it was agreed that 3 new containers with taps would be installed on the allotment field. It is predicted that the cost of installing the pipes will be covered by the balance of the car parking allocation and the pipe fittings should be no more than £200. Cllr Pearce to draft a plan with costs to be presented at the next meeting.

Action: Agenda item for next meeting.

12. Finance

12.1 Agree Bank Reconciliation

This will be completed prior to the next meeting.

Action: Agenda item for the next meeting.

12.2 Review and approve the year end accounts 2023/24

The Finance working party had met with the Clerk to consider the year end accounts for 2023-24. A copy of the reports showing the summary of payments plus a detailed report of all payments and receipts had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting. The headlines are that **receipts** gross total: £104,666.23. **Payments** gross total: £122,934.68 which highlights an £18,268.45 overspend. Some of the key ones are:

£10,000.00 was held in reserves from the previous year to go towards the new hard-court fence along with the contribution to Pennys for the levelling of the football pitch

£5,559.21 was paid out on solving the electrical issues at the changing rooms which had not been part of the budget.

£1,567.00 for professional fees (allotment lease & planning app fee)

£1,399.70 overspend on play equipment repairs

After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Pearce and seconded by Cllr Bell that the year-end reports be approved and signed by the Chair.

Vote 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to upload to the website

12.3 Agree Financial Risk Assessment 2024/25

The Clerk had shared prior to the meeting the Financial risk assessment which was unchanged from last year. It was proposed by Cllr Pearce and seconded by Cllr Banks that the risk assessment should be approved.

Vote 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

12.4 Agree Asset Register 2024/25

The Clerk had shared the updated asset register with all Councillors prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Bell and seconded by Cllr Pearce that the Asset register was up to date and should be approved.

Vote 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

12.5 Consider & approve section 1 Audit - Annual Governance statement 2023/24

The Clerk had signed and circulated section 1 of the Annual Governance statement for consideration prior to the meeting. The Clerk then read out the questions with Councillors answering yes to questions 1 to 8 and not applicable to question 9. It was agreed that the Chair should sign the statement.

12.6 Consider and approve section 2 Audit - Accounting statements 2023/24

The Clerk then read out Section 2 the Accounting statements for 2023/24 which had been completed using the figures for the previous financial year ending 2023 and year ending 2024. All Councillors present acknowledged that the page was completed correctly and agreed that the Chair and the Clerk should sign off the section at the earliest opportunity.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstained

12.7 Discuss & agree quotes for fence repair @ Highbury Playing Field, Highbury Play Area and removal of bench at Stockhill

The Clerk confirmed that a section of the fence at Highbury play area had come down due to rot in the fence post. The Clerk was concerned that if it was not repaired promptly the fencing panel would go missing so sought a quote which was presented to the Chair and accepted under delegated powers. The fence was repaired the following day.

Action: Discuss & agree quotes for fence repair @ Highbury Playing Field and removal of bench at Stockhill to be an agenda item for next meeting

12.8 Accounts approved for payments:

The following invoices were presented for payment:

HMRC - National Insurance	£ 103.67
V Watts - Clerks Expenses	£ 44.96
Clear insurance Management Ltd – Annual Insurance	£ 908.41
Nippers Tippers Ltd	£ 25.00
YMCA – Coleford Youth Club	£6000.00

It was proposed by Cllr Pearce and seconded by Cllr Bell that the payments should be made.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstained

13. Update on Health & Well Being Grant Application

There is work going on behind the scenes to pull together the application. It was agreed that Menshed would be discussed at the next meeting.

Action: Agenda item for the next meeting

14. Agree memorandum of understanding for Community payback

It was proposed by Cllr Bell and seconded by Cllr Evans that the memorandum of understanding should be signed and returned to the Probation service.

Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstained

Action: Clerk to return to Probation service

15. Discuss and agree request for engagement in an exercise to help pull together ‘a guidance toolkit for public rights of way maintenance

All Councillors had considered the document from Somerset Council which the Clerk had shared prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Banks and seconded by Cllr Bell that the Clerk should complete the questionnaire and return as requested.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstained

Action: Clerk to complete

16. Meetings to attend or attended

13/05/24 @ 11am – Flood meeting at Shape Mendip. Somerset Cllr Barry Clarke will attend and report back

15/05/24 @ 7pm on Zoom – Climate Action meeting. All Councillors to try and attend
Various training dates – Somerset Association of Local Councils. Councillors to notify the Clerk if they wish to attend.

17. Correspondence

There was none.

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

There were none.

19. Date of Next Meetings:

22nd May 2024 Planning meeting

12th June 2024 Parish Council Meeting

20. The meeting went into private session

The meeting ended at 21.35hrs