

Parish Council of Coleford

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Annual Parish Meeting held Wednesday 26th March 2025

Present

Cllr Philip Ham (Chairman presiding)

There were 9 members of the public present and the Parish Clerk, Vickie Watts taking the minutes.

1. Apologies Absence (acceptance of any reasons offered)

Nikki Reynolds, Youth Secretary for CAFC

Nic Edwards, Village Agent

Julia Neesam, Holy Trinity Church

Carrie Hemmings, Fabulous, Fun and Fit seated chair exercises

Deborah Douglas-Burke

2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting 27th March 2024

The minutes had been circulated and posted on the website for review. They were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and were therefore signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

There were none.

4. Parish Council Chairman's report

Philip Ham sent the following report:

This is the Annual Report for Coleford Parish Council. We are allowed 13 Councillors but have 2 vacancies - We're all volunteers. We meet 2nd Wednesday in the month plus 4th Wednesday when needed. We are controlled and supported by our Clerk - Vickie Watts. In recent years our workload has increased:

1. In Planning Applications: - considered, discussed, consulted.

People have different views. Some are controversial. We agree, we disagree with Planning Officers and even Central Gov. policy but we have to make a decision. Thank you to those Councillors who often take the lead on Planning.

2. We maintain Village Assets: playing fields, cemetery, play parks, hard courts, etc. We also now have around 70 allotments let out.

Thank you to Cllrs Chris Pearce, Mathew Allen and Adam Dresher who have helped with many projects including creating the disabled toilets at the Hub, the water system at the allotments including installing more tanks.

I would also like to thank Coleford Conservation Group for planting the trees and for looking after them along with the butterfly bank.

We now have full planning permission to level the playing field (after 2 years) along with operational plans, seeding and maintenance plans. We now need to wait for Pennys to source the appropriate soils to do the job.

A big thank you must go to RM Pennys for taking the project on and for Nick Dunn - Planning Consultant, Coleford Athletic FC for their cooperation and patience and the Playing Field trustees for making this happen.

3. Finance:

The budget for the last year has transpired to be accurate, but we have increased this year's budget for the following reasons:

1. Extra work to be paid for re: grass cutting & bin emptying as Somerset Council are stopping the service. This equates to £10 to £12K
2. Inflation.
3. Cost of living.

4. Facilitating:

We try to facilitate activities within the parish.

- a) Annual grants: £2,500.00 The working party made up of Cllrs Banks, Evans & Pearce go through them and make recommendations to the Council
- b) @ The Hub
- c) Youth Club
- d) Litter picks
- e) Footpaths – Reporting maintenance requirements
- f) Menshed - Patrick Abrahams & Cllr Pearce have worked hard to get this set up
- g) Health & Safety

5. Thank you

At this time, I would like to thank all the Councillors that make up the Council. They all make a difference and are all volunteers. I would also like to thank everyone who makes our village what it is. Those that are involved in events, or just help others in need.

But - most thanks must go to our Clerk Vickie Watts.

- a. She keeps us in order.
- b. She keeps the books straight.
- c. Minutes & agendas are always on time.
- d. Keeps the website & social media up to date.
- e. Records all assets & deals with contractors and allotments
- f. Inspects all play equipment weekly.
- g. Last of all - always helpful to anyone and most of all me.

Thank you all.

6. **Somerset County Council report**

Somerset Councillors Philip Ham provided the following report:

I share the Central & East Mendip Division with Cllr Barry Clarke. Barry has been in Bridgwater all day — and said he would be here if he got back in time!!

The new council is not operating as it should have. Plans and budget were drawn up just before 'Covid', Ukraine war and the Cost-of-Living crisis. It has not been implemented quick enough and delays have cost money.

We are where we are. A budget of £623 million

- Reduction of 650 jobs
- Selling of assets
- Devolution of assets + services to city, town + parish councils
- Increase of 7.5% council tax

Out of £623 million:

Adult Social Services: £251 million

Children & Family Services: £159 million

All other services: £213 million

That's 66% on Adults and Children social care and these figures are increasing year on year.

Would it have been worse if we had not gone unitary? I don't think so, Districts were losing money and we have reduced overheads around senior management. Somerset Council has changed, but so has the world.

7. PCSO Report - No report was received

8. Coleford Youth Club - No report was received

9. The Village Agent

Nic Edwards did not attend but gave the following report that the Village Agent programme from CCS has changed this year, so that there are specific areas of service provision in the Shepton and Vale of Frome LCNs.

Village Agent, Carers' Support Service, taking referrals from the community for anyone in a caring role.

Village Agent, Connector Support Service, taking referrals directly from Adult Social Care.

Both roles can support with a wide range of issues including, but not limited to sourcing care, accessing emergency food parcels, accessing community activities, sourcing furniture, befriending, sourcing funds to repair or replace broken items such as fridges and cookers, referring for help with finances and debt advice, linking to groups for support with bereavement, health issues, exercise and hobbies for example.

The Talking cafes in our area are run, as you know by the Health Connector team, but we do have an agent drop-in at Frome library 10-12 every third Wednesday of the month and we support the Farmers' Health hub at Standerwick 10-12 every fourth Wednesday of the month.

The Social Prescribing element from other areas of the community, previously undertaken by Village Agents (e.g. self-referrals and other professional referrals) now sits with the Health Connectors who are attached to a client's surgery. We are able to support residents whose GP surgery is outside of the Somerset area and therefore are not covered by the Health Connector Service.

We are currently looking at gaps in provision, based on what issues clients come to us with and we know that many local residents still struggle to find support with form-filling, paperwork and banking queries. We are also hoping to start a board games session for clients with Learning Disabilities. It is likely that this will run in Frome in the first instance.

We currently have a vacancy for a Village Agent, Connector Support Service for the Shepton Mallet area, details can be found on our website www.ccslovesomerset.org

On a side note, agents are finding it more difficult to resolve issues (mainly food and funding referrals) for Shepton LCN area clients. Fair Frome has historically supported Coleford clients with food bank referrals, white goods, furniture items, carpets etc, whilst Frome Rotary, Relief in Sickness and Lions have also in the past, been supportive of our requests for funding support. It now feels like there has been a shift to ensure their resources are reaching Vale of Frome residents. Understandably, this has had and will continue to have a significant impact on how Coleford area residents are supported.

10. Coleford Methodist

Mary Pearce attended the meeting and gave the following report:

The church is the people not the building. Early Christians met in each other's homes. When John Wesley came to Coleford 22 times, he preached in the open air. When Coleford Methodists closed their building, we moved to each other's homes. Now we meet in Douglas Yates Court.

Love to Move meet in Douglas Yates Court and is thriving. Knit and Natter meet in Douglas Yates Court and is thriving. Coleford Methodist Church meet in Douglas Yates Court and is thriving. The church is the people not the building. We meet twice a month on Sundays and every other week on Tuesdays. We have a full programme planned for the rest of the year. All our meetings are in the afternoon. This allows for people who maybe need to wait for a carer to help them in the morning.

On Sundays we start to turn up at about 12.30 for a one o'clock light lunch. Then our service starts at 2.00. Of course there is always a cuppa after the service.

Tuesdays we start to turn up after two o'clock for a two thirty start. After a couple of favourite hymns, our Christian speaker can talk about anything. Maybe a Christian Festival, a Saint's Day, a holiday Trip, a famous person from history or they maybe share a craft with us. Always followed by a cuppa and a chat. Everyone is welcome at either or both. Transport available. The church is the people not the building.

11. @ The Hub Philip Ham

@ The Hub continues to provide. We need more Trustees and Committee members. We are a CIC not for profit organisation. We have struggled with costs recently with the increases to electricity, gas, insurance and cleaning but bookings are up. We now accommodate:

Youth Club	Training for teachers from	Climate Change Group and Table
Dagmar's Café	Newbury School	Tennis club
Talking Café	Yoga	
Acoustic Club	Parish Council	

12. Coleford Athletic Football Club

Nikki Reynolds did not attend but gave the following report:

Adult Section

Coleford Athletic FC's adult section is enjoying a highly successful season, fielding three teams: two Saturday sides and an Over 35s Sunday team.

The first team is performing strongly, currently holding third place in the Mid-Somerset Premier Division. They've also achieved a significant milestone by reaching the Somerset Junior Cup final, a coveted achievement for clubs at their level. Their pursuit of silverware continues as they remain contenders in the Paulton Hospital Cup charity cup and the Dimmock Green Cup.

The reserve team, competing in Division 1 of the Mid-Somerset League, has faced a tougher challenge this season. However, under the dedicated management of Stu Button, they consistently demonstrate their commitment to the club. Notably, Coleford Athletic has established a valuable partnership with a local U16 team, creating a seamless pathway for young players transitioning to adult football. Three U16 players have already successfully integrated into the adult sides, with more expected to follow, securing the club's long-term future.

The veterans' team is also having a strong season, currently sitting second in the Bryan Wells Division. They reached the semi-finals of the Somerset Cup, narrowly losing 1-0 to Westland Sports.

The club is looking forward to the upcoming pitch leveling project and expresses its sincere appreciation for the ongoing support from the Parish Council and Pennys.

Youth Section

Coleford Athletic FC's youth section is thriving, nurturing the next generation of players with three vibrant teams: Under 7s, Under 9s, and Under 13s. The Under 7s and Under 9s are showcasing their talent in the Mid-Somerset Norton League, while the Under 13s are making their mark in the Mid-Wilts League.

All three youth teams are performing exceptionally well, providing a positive and engaging footballing experience for over 50 children. As the season draws to a close, the youth section eagerly anticipates participation in summer tournaments and is already laying the groundwork for a successful upcoming season.

The club is fortunate to have a dedicated team of volunteers who contribute significantly to the youth section's success. A strong and collaborative relationship exists between the youth and adult sections, fostering a clear pathway for young players to progress within the club. Looking ahead, the club's ambition is to further expand the youth teams, ensuring a consistent flow of talent into the adult sides.

Demonstrating its commitment to player development, Coleford Athletic has funded one of its coaches to obtain their UEFA C license. This investment in coaching expertise will undoubtedly elevate the quality of training and benefit the young players' development.

13. Coleford Climate Action

Melanie Moulding Chair of Coleford Climate Action attended the meeting and gave the following report:

It is eighteen months since the Coleford Climate Action (CCA) started with the support of Coleford Parish Council which had adopted 'A Green Charter' endeavoring, for Coleford to be carbon net-zero by 2045. A target of completely negating the amount of greenhouse 'gases' produced by human activity, to be achieved by reducing emissions and implementing methods of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It is hoped by the CCA that Net Zero will be achieved in Coleford at an earlier date. The Village Survey established that climate change was an issue of concern in the village.

After an inspiring talk given by Steve Mewes from Wedmore on 18th July 2023 Coleford Climate Action was formed. Once Allison Stills - treasurer, opened a bank account and CCA was able to apply for a grant and received £150.00 for Dan Hopkins to set up a website <https://colefordclimateaction.org.uk>

The first major project of the CCA led by Dan Hopkins, was 'Green Open Homes Energy Efficiency events.' The Steering group has gained support and training from the Centre for Sustainable Energy through their Rural Community support Network and the CSE Centre for Sustainable Energy. Which has shown ways to supported and empowered village residents to have healthy, warm homes while being energy aware and in April received a grant of £4,470.00 to run

- Energy café popups at existing events and one event run by Coleford Climate Action
- Purchase kit for display at events. i.e. pop-up banners
- Energy packs to give out to people (25 energy packs)

10th June 2024 As part of the need of transport in our rural village and the dependence on motor vehicles and the poor public transport Melanie Moulding organized an E-bike event at Bishop Henderson School, kindly allowed by the school Principal Mr Lane. Emma from Frome Bike Project brought four E-bikes for people in the village to try riding. The event was most enjoyed by the participants.

Teresa Hopkins having taken part in an 'ecotogether' course in Bath introduced the course to the CCA and it was decided that the course should be offered to our members. Following an introduction to 'ecotogether' by Helen Haddon which focused on community driven organized groups to participated in five structured sessions covering: -

1. The power to act. 2. Energy. 3. Transport. 4. Food. 5. Resources

The five sessions were well attended, each session large enough to be able to have two groups, enabling all participants to contribute to thoughtful discussions on each subject. The 'ecotogether' structured sessions were helped by a concise information pack on each subject.

As a finale of the Food section of 'ecotogether' it was suggested having a meal together. Melanie Moulding organized a vegan potluck supper on the at the Hub attended by 26 people, who produced 26 different vegan meals.

Alongside the above projects CCA's network of support was broadened by attending meetings with other community groups. These include Transition Bath events, Eco Together, Mendip Country Practice, Somerset Bus Partnership and Frome eBikes Project. The CCA is also a member of Somerset Climate Action Network and Community Action.

The Steering Group is most efficiently organized with agendas for and minutes of meetings by Libby Meyrick. Times and dates of activities and generally keeping the CCA running smoothly. Allison Stills the Treasurer of the CCA set up the bank account and has been instrumental in in acquiring the objects for the Energy Packs and applying for grants. Teresa Hopkins has tirelessly attended any meeting or event that feeds into the aims of the CCA sharing her information which is greatly appreciated. Dan Hopkins is the Communications Officer and committedly has regularly contributed ideas to keep our homes warm with retrofit information to the Community Magazine and enthusiastically developing the Retrofit Project. Kirsty Dougal shares her knowledge of the need to plan our planting for the benefit of the environment also in the Community Magazine.

There is a warm welcome to Coleford Climate Action to all and we encourage our 56 members to share ideas on our Facebook page to further the aims of the group and we are looking for anyone who wants to join the Steering Group to lead a project, to make our village resilient to the extremes of weather conditions that the scientist have predicted.

14. Coleford Conservation Group

Andy Conn attended the meeting and gave the following report:

Introduction

Thank you for the invitation.

Brief Background

I explained the origins of the group at last year's meeting, so I will summarise by saying that we have been running since 2016, starting with the Butterfly Bank, in Lower Coleford PF.

In 2022, we created a small formal committee and a constitution, so that we could have a bank account and bid for grants. In the past two and a half years we have attracted nearly £2400 in grants, including £125 from the PC. Our most recent grant of £590 was from the Halecombe Quarry Community Fund, and was received last summer.

Recent Work. Since our report last year ...

- 1) we have continued with Summer and Winter maintenance at the butterfly bank. As well as raking over the Butterfly Bank, the winter event included a light pruning of the fruit trees and the willow dome in the Lower Playing Field, to keep them in shape.
- 2) We completed a further grant aided project to spread selected wildflower seed and plant plugs at the Bank last October. Our surveys have detected success with some new species – field scabious, kidney vetch, wild carrot and yellow rattle. Primroses and cowslips are more plentiful at the moment.
- 3) We again spread yellow rattle seed to help other wild flowers (thank you again to Chris and Mary Pearce amongst others for permission to collect).
- 4) On March 9th we carried out our second planters work session at the garden opposite the surgery on Church Street. We weeded and added more wild flowers and herbs to several areas there.
- 5) We arranged two well attended wildflower walks last Summer – in June and July.
- 6) Two of the committee worked with Coleford Acoustic Club and the owners of Church Farm to hold a second wassail event 16thth February. Again, this was well attended, despite a very cold day.
- 7) Last November we gave a talk on activities to Coleford's Tuesday Afternoon Club.
- 8) Our big new project – which is in the early stages – is the native tree nursery being set up at the Vobster allotment site. We would like to thank the Parish Council for renting us the triangle of land there. We have bought in a load of Somerset Council's compost with some of our grant money, and set up some seed beds. This is a long-term project, needing lots of research by the leaders in the early stages, and some trial and error. But some seeds have germinated and are being grown on.

The Future

- 1) We are planning Summer maintenance at the Butterfly Bank. Then Winter 25/26.
- 2) We are intending to lead more wildflower walks this year and more yellow rattle seed collection.
- 3) Maybe refreshing more village planters if people like those at Church Street
- 4) Wild flower surveys at the Butterfly Bank – to assess the results of seeding and planting.
- 5) More work at the tree nursery
- 6) Promoting garden wilding at the Coleford Craft and Flower Show
- 7) And, perhaps another Wassail in 2026.

Finally, we have enjoyed working with the Parish Council and feel that we all gain from this. Contacts – Details often in Parish Magazine. We have a Facebook page.

15. Coleford Flower & Craft Show

Tina Wadley attended the meeting and gave the following report:

Thank you for inviting me to the meeting tonight to inform you of what has been happening with the Coleford Flower and Craft show. I have been involved with the Coleford Flower and Craft show since 2019, just before we went into lockdown and have had the pleasure of being chairperson for the last 3 years. In this time, we have, with the help of the small amount of people on the committee, made changes in the way we have organized the show to try and simplify the process on registration night and on the day of the show.

With the help of sponsors, judges and money made by fundraising events the show has managed to keep going for all of these years. The last 2 years we have raised funds with the help of Keith Wadley and Kevin Price repeating their Walk Down Memory Lane picture show at the Royal British Legion. Even though people have been to see this before when they first done this to raise money for CRG, they are coming back to see it again. They are planning on doing Walk Down Memory Lane 3 in June this year and we are really grateful for them to give up their time to do this in aid of the show.

This year is the Coleford Flower and Craft show's 125th show and we have added a theme of Butterflies and Bees to the schedule to make it a more memorable event and we are hoping this will attract more people to enter the show. We are also planning on having the face painter again and the ice cream van if they are available.

We are hoping with the help of the Head Teacher at Bishop Henderson School, that more children will enter the show. We are providing free Sunflower Seeds with instructions of how to grow them again this year.

Schedules are now available at the Pharmacy, Co-Op and The Royal British Legion if anyone would like to pick one up and decide what you would like to enter. The more the merrier.

The committee is made up of about 11 people in the village and we would welcome more people to volunteer, either on the day of the show or to join our committee. We only meet at The Hub about 4 times a year so not loads of meetings to attend.

16. Coleford Knit & Natter

Geraldine James attended and gave the following report:

Thanks were given to the Parish Council for the small grant of £50.00. Wooden Knitting Needles were bought & Soft Touch Crochet Hooks, for members who have Arthritic fingers.

We meet DYC 2-4pm every Friday. We have a regular 11 members + 1 home knitter. Past members call in when available. We work on our own projects, and donate items to various Charities, usually local, but also overseas. We rely on donations of wool from local people, and Council Grants to buy new wool to knit for Charity. We have both Men & Woman members, and are willing to teach adults to knit or crochet.

We donated to The Gospel Hall, Julian House, items also go to Romania through a local lady. We gave a monetary donation to Coleford Food Bank and we support Dag's Cafe by having lunch once or twice a year as a group.

17. Holy Trinity Church

Julia Neesam, the Church Wardens did not attend but provided the following report:

This has been quite a year for Holy Trinity Coleford with Clarissa leaving us in September, myself and Phil Brewer have been on a steep learning curve as Churchwardens.

During the year we have the school in the church for a couple of services at Harvest festival and Christmas these were very attended.

Our remembrance service was again very good and a service was also held at the British Legion.

We managed to have all our Christmas services with several vicars stepping in to take them.

We have had various issues with maintenance, gutters falling down, a leak in the vestry, and the latest with the tree coming down in the churchyard apologies to anyone this affected as it took us some time to find someone to do the work especially as it happened just before Christmas. This has caused numerous issues within that area, and there is a further tree to be taken down to make the area safe for the future.

We are very grateful to all the volunteers that run the Coffee mornings and lunches every other week at the church hall and all those that attend and are so generous. Without their time and money, the church would not survive.

Since Clarissa has retired, we have had several vicars who take the services most are retired but live in the area. Our Rural Dean has worked out a rota for the next year so that we can have a Sunday service each week.

The future of the church is unknown as our funds are very short. Please come to a service and you will receive a warm welcome and help to raise valuable funds for the church.

18. Fabulous, Fun & Fit

Carrie Hemmings did not attend but provided the following report:

Fabulous, Fun & Fit is an hour of fun seated exercises or seated workout to music followed by a well-earned cuppa and chat. We meet up every Monday 10am at Douglas Yates Court.

Participants benefit from a holistic experience of keeping physically & mentally fit through taking part in exercise & then socializing over a cuppa and connecting with friends within the community.

The exercises focus on all areas of the body to keep people moving and agile, we also try some coordination exercises that are great fun. The sessions are also interactive as some people have suggested favourite songs and helped with choreographing the exercises to go with them. We have a keen knitter who has knitted a tea cozy for our well-loved tea pot and sweat bands for the rest of the group. We celebrate people's birthdays (any excuse for cake!). Each week is different however, full of positive energy and good vibes. It's a wonderful way to start the week.

We are a relaxed and fun-loving bunch of people that always have new "news", info and jokes to chat about and tell and have built a very caring community with each other.

The sessions are open to anyone, any age and any fitness level. We are also dementia and adults with learning differences friendly, providing a welcoming and relaxed space for people living with dementia, memory loss, learning differences and for their carers.

Please feel free to pop in and see what we are all about

19. Coleford and Holcombe Community Magazine

Alan Townsend did not attend but gave the following report:

The Magazine continues to provide some 74 pages of community news to Coleford and Holcombe. With our very active team we distribute nearly 600 copies with 11 editions in the year. We like to think it contributes to the health and well-being of our community by keeping people in touch with what's going on and providing important contact details, and bus timetables. Although Adam moved to Singapore to work last May he has continued to manage all the IT related functions of the editorial team. We have survived financially with the generous support of the Sperring Trust. This has now been exhausted so we need further funds to keep afloat. If anyone knows family or friends who could advertise with us, please get in touch. We are keen make every household aware of the magazine and are preparing a publicity campaign and leaflet drop. We would also like to find a way for the Parish Council to be informed of all newcomers to the village so we can deliver a copy to introduce them to what is going on. Meanwhile we welcome everyone's inputs.

20. Date of the next Annual meeting of the Parish

Wednesday 25th March 2026

Meeting closed at 20.55hrs

These minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting held on 25th March 2026 and were duly signed by the Chair:

Dated 25th March 2026