

# Parish Council of Coleford

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Miss V Watts  
Clerk to the Council  
Tel: 07971 516916 / 01749 880428  
Email: [clerk@colefordpc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@colefordpc.org.uk)  
Website: [www.colefordpc.org.uk](http://www.colefordpc.org.uk)

Gallant Hill Farm  
Foxcote  
Radstock  
BA3 5YB

## Annual Parish Meeting held Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026

### Present

Clr Philip Ham (Chairman presiding)

There were 28 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

Julia Neesam, Holy Trinity Church

### 2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025

The minutes had been 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. Presentations from:

#### 4.1 Tyler Hill Consulting regarding the Solar Farm proposal near Lipyeate

Max Gibson and two other representatives attended and ran through the proposal with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation.

The slides will be available on the Parish Council website [www.colefordpc.org.uk/meetings.php](http://www.colefordpc.org.uk/meetings.php)

The public consultation will take place April / May with the planning application submitted June / July.

There were various questions from those present, namely:

- a. How visible will it be? The mock ups will be created to help give a real view of what the site would look like from various points. The Parish Council will be invited to propose the locations that these should be taken from.
- b. Will there be CCTV? Yes, but cameras will be facing inwards and set at a max height of 2.5m on a pole.
- c. Proposal to install hedging. It is acknowledged that it will take 10 years for these to mature.
- d. Deer fencing. Has a deer survey been completed? No
- e. What is the life span of the panels. Should be up to 40 years.
- f. Can Coleford benefit? Not yet but this can be explored.
- g. Are the footpaths being diverted? No, they are being accommodated within the layout.
- h. What is the quality of the soil? Most is grade 3B but 19% is grade 2.
- i. If successful, when will it be connected to the grid? Not able to say but probably 5 years.

Max said that if anyone has any other questions, they can email the Clerk who can send it on to Tyler for a response.

#### **4.2 Coleford Parish Council regarding the Emergency Plan**

Cllr Melanie Moulding shared a copy of the Draft Emergency Plan and explained that there was an intention to recruit volunteers to act as First Responders, trained to complete first aid in particular CPR, for each road throughout the village. Anyone interested in getting involved should contact the Clerk via email [clerk@colefordpc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@colefordpc.org.uk)

#### **5. Parish Council Chairman's report**

Philip Ham sent the following report:

The last year many of us on the council have started to realize we are all getting older, having health problems, and believe over the coming years we will need to hand the batons over to a younger generation. This is important because our views are out of touch with the younger generation, whether it's electronic devices, communications, even language, social media and AI.

We now have a budget getting close to £100k, which needs spending wisely. We are bound to keep 50% of our budget in reserves at any one time. We have to keep accurate accounts and records, which are audited by external auditors, and keep our policies up to date, including inspections such as tree surveys, memorials in the cemetery, and GDPR.

Our main activities are administration:

- Planning
- Road defects: potholes, drains, lights
- Playing fields
- Children's play areas
- Environment: litter bins, dog bins
- Communications: press releases, agendas, Facebook, website, letters of public concern, or listening to problems
- Crime prevention
- Allotments (sold out again)
- Grants and many more
- Supporting other groups like Coleford Conservation Group and the Climate Change Group

This week the levelling of the football pitch starts, which when done will allow Coleford Athletic to climb the league ladder, plus a mini pitch to allow the junior teams to play games.

Gladman and Rainer sites continue to go through the design and reserve matters stage. We are told that the sewage works will be upgraded between 2032 and 2035.

We continue to improve the allotments, with the last plot hopefully being taken up this week. We have also just been awarded money to install new goals and basketball hoops on the hard courts.

Before I finish, may I thank you all for your kind wishes while I was unwell, and to all those who stepped up in my absence, and for all your work in the last 12 months.

Every year I thank Vickie for her hard work rounding us all up, controlling our thoughts, producing agendas, amazing minutes, writing reports and correspondence to many. This year is no different.

Thank you, Vickie, and a big thank you from me personally for all you did extra this year, especially around the time of the budget. Thank you all again for coming and for your support.

P.S. I would also like to thank Wainwrights for their help in closing Charmborough Lane, Vickie for organizing, and all those that turned out. Thank you.

#### **6. Somerset County Council report**

Somerset Councillors Philip Ham provided the following report:

A balanced budget has been reached for this year. The meeting when this was agreed was shut down with no debate and Cllr Ham has written a letter of complaint about how it was conducted. The budget was described as fragile - What would happen if war should break out or a rise in inflation, would that break it?

The Auditors have raised 3 serious red flags, which is not a good situation.

Assets have already been sold off. What happens in 35-50 years when the loans are repayable and there are no assets to offset? This is not known.

**7. PCSO Report - No report was received**

**8. Coleford Youth Club - No report was received**

**9. Coleford Knit & Natter**

Geraldine James attending the meeting and gave the following report:

We meet at Douglas Yates Court on Fridays 2-4pm. There are regularly 11 people, and one home knitter. Past members pop in when available and we will teach any adult how to knit and crochet and we have male and female members. We work on our own projects and donate to various charities both local and overseas.

To do this we rely on donations of wool from local people and from grants for the Council. We thank the Council for the £75 and we bought wool with this.

Donation of blankets, hats and scarves were given to the Gospel Hall. Hats, gloves etc. were given to a local lady to take to Romania and ongoing is donation to Paulton Hospitals elderly ward, donations of blankets. A donation of £50 was given to the RUH towards a new scanner. A monetary donation was also given to Coleford Food Bank and we support Dag's Café by having a lunch as a group once or twice a year.

I'm stepping down as organizer of the group, but will still be a member. Mel Smith and Martin Hall will be taking over.

**10. Coleford Flower & Craft Show**

Tina Wadley attended the meeting and gave the following report:

Thank you for inviting me to the AGM tonight to represent the Coleford Flower and Craft Show. As you know, it was the Coleford Flower and Craft Show's 125th show last year, and we could not have wished for a better day. The show was opened by Dawn and Alan Townsend. Not only did the sun shine, but we had 50% more entries than the year before, and we hope this continues this year. The only downfall was that the ice cream van broke down and could not make it. We had the face painter, bottle stall, and pick-a-square, as well as the café selling homemade cakes, which went down very well. This year's show is on Sunday 9th August, again at the Coleford British Legion. Last year we had a class for those under 16 to create a front cover for this year's schedule, and it was won by 11-year-old Felicity Cliff. These are now available in the Old Co-op, the pharmacy, and the Royal British Legion, and I have some with me if anyone would like one.

Philip Ham added:

We had an excellent show last year with entries up, good sponsorship and an enjoyable day by everyone. This year's show is on Sunday the 9th of August. It is the 126th show. Schedules are now out and available for all committee members.

In 2011 the old committee running the show wanted to close it down. A new committee was formed, mainly four new people with a couple of the originals joining the new committee: Mel Smith, Shelia Perry and Myra Perry. They were such a great help as they knew the ropes. I am sorry to say Myra Perry passed away on Monday this week. She was a wonderful lady, always willing to help. Very talented, writing extremely neat and tidy. We have missed her the last few years but she will never be forgotten. From Scotland but loved Coleford. RIP Myra."

**11. Tuesday Afternoon Club**

Eileen Smith attended the meeting and gave the following report:

We will be celebrating our 27th year in July but sadly membership has decreased mainly due to age-related health reasons, and seven deaths over the past 16 months. On average we have 22 members at meetings ranging in age from 70-96, with 30 paid-up memberships.

We meet every two weeks and have a varied programme: speakers, entertainment, and representatives from charities, and five trips out—mainly to garden centres now due to mobility problems. Visitors are always welcome to meetings if interested in a particular subject.

In the past year we have had a guide, Neil, from Wookey Hole Caves; a talk by Kathy on her charity work in Romania; and a talk about Water Survival Boxes from Westfield by Jim. These three people are all living in Coleford. Also, a presentation on Coleford Canal and the local area, a milliner, slides on Peru and Bolivia, and a display of decorated charity-shop wedding dresses.

This year we raised our entrance to £3.00 from £2.00, which includes a raffle, tea and biscuits, as the rent of the hall has increased, and £10.00 annual subscriptions. We donate £40.00 to speakers unless they charge, which can be considerably more. We also decided that we would make three trips out instead of five and have a quiz or bingo instead. We do not want to raise prices too much as we do not know people's financial situations.

Trips are now limited to half days to garden centres due to mobility problems for some members and are greatly subsidized. Transport costs have increased considerably with an extra fuel charge due to world circumstances. Our funds will decrease greatly this year and funds will be discussed again at our AGM in January 2027 regarding the future.

Tuesday Afternoon Club is greatly enjoyed and is a social afternoon for many who live alone. Coleford Parish Council has always supported us with a grant towards transport and it is greatly appreciated.

## **12. Coleford Athletic Football Club**

Nikki Reynolds did not attend but gave the following report:

### Youth Section Update: Coleford Athletic FC

Our youth section is absolutely buzzing this year. It is a joy to see the next generation of Coleford players progressing, as all our squads have officially moved up an age grade for the 2026 season."

The club is currently supporting over 50 local children across the Under 8s, Under 10s, and Under 14s teams.

- The Under 8s and Under 10s continue to perform well in the Mid-Somerset Norton League.
- The Under 14s are representing the village strongly in the Mid-Wilts League.

Demand for youth football is higher than ever, to the point that there are now two separate Under 8 teams. However, the club has reached its maximum capacity for teams due to limited pitch and training space. This creates a balance between ambition and practicality, even as a strong "conveyor belt" of talent moves toward the adult sides.

As the season winds down, the focus is on summer tournaments and ensuring a smooth transition into next year. The club highlights the dedication of its volunteers, who help create a strong link between the youth and adult sections. "We're proud of what we've built here, and we look forward to another successful year of football in Coleford.

### Adult Section – Parish Council Report

Coleford Athletic FC is well into the current football season, running three adult teams:

- Two Saturday teams
- One Veterans team on Sundays

All three teams have started the season strongly:

- The First Team sits top of the Midsomer Norton & District Premier Division and remains in three cup competitions.
- The Reserves are currently second in their league and still competing in a cup.
- The Veterans finished runners-up in their league and are now in the semi-final of their end-of-season cup.

A major highlight for the club is the upcoming levelling of the pitch, a long-awaited improvement that will significantly enhance the playing surface and facilities. This upgrade will support the club's long-term ambitions and benefit both players and the wider community.

The report closes with appreciation: "Coleford Athletic FC would like to thank the Parish Council for its continued support of local sport and community activity."

## **13. Coleford Methodist**

Mary Pearce attended the meeting and gave the following report:

Coleford Methodist Church is a class of Frome Wesley Methodist Church, so is supported by the Somerset and Mendip Circuit. We have four meetings a month. Usually, a Sunday Service on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 2.00. And a Tuesday Guild meeting every other Tuesday. Sometimes this means that they are in the same week and then a two-week gap. Sometimes not. The Sunday Service is preceded by a light lunch. So, we start to turn up at 11.30 or 12.00 to set things up. We serve coffee as people arrive, then lunch at one. The preacher usually comes straight from a morning service, so we hope

appreciates the hospitality, as preachers did in days of old when villages held services all day on Sundays and gave hospitality to the visiting preacher. Often, we have another drink after the service so some of us are at Douglas Yates Court from about 11.30 to about 3.30. This allows some people to drop their relative off for four hours and get a short break from caring. Also, several who live alone to get some fellowship at the weekend, and a shared meal.

The C of E service is at 9.30. and the Gospel Hall service is at 10.00. Both are too early for those who rely on carers to get them up in the morning. Also, Coleford has no bus service at the weekend at all, so non drivers cannot get to services outside of the village. So, we are filling a gap in the lives of some folk. The last two services were attended by 10 people, and each one had three people missing.

The Tuesday Guild also meets in Douglas Yates Court. We start to turn up at about 2 o'clock for a prompt 2.30 start. The members are mostly C of E attenders, and two are otherwise house bound. We have a variety of speakers who are all Christian but can talk about anything that they like. Again, we can have up to ten people attending, but often we have friends staying or medical appointments.

Our rent at DYC is £10 only if we turn up. If we cancel, we do not pay. We cover our costs at Guild and send our collections for Sunday to Frome Wesley.

We are grateful to those who help set the room up, those who bring and share food, give lifts to others, all our preachers and speakers. But especially to Ron Brewer for playing the piano so well.

John Wesley visited Coleford 22 times and called us 'the honest colliers of Coleford' and regarded Coleford as his 'little Kingswood in Somerset'.

On Sunday April 12th Rev. Marcus Torchon will be our preacher. He is our District Chair, the equivalent of a bishop in the Church of England. He originally came from Haiti. When we lived in Australia I went to the Wesleyan Hospital, one of the biggest hospitals in Brisbane. Maybe some of those honest colliers helped to spread Methodism all around the world and back again.

#### **14. Coleford Rocks**

Lee Reynolds attended the meeting and said that Crocs is a small team of volunteers that have been hosting fund raisers – quizzes, bingo etc to raise money for the Music Festival. The 2026 event will take place on the 25<sup>th</sup> July in a new field next to the Miners Ponds which will be safer. There will be 7 bands, plus a good display of Classic Cars, Tractors and Commercials. As the first year was such a success, we have been able to invest more money into the 2026 event including more security and toilets.

#### **15. Coleford Food store**

Joanna Palmer attended the meeting and gave the following report:

1. There has been a steady stream of referrals.
2. Stocking up on supplies
3. A JustGiving page has been set up
4. Food has been donated from the Community Action Group members
5. A cooking class is to be set up to help share knowledge
6. Hoping to open a Community larder in due course
7. Volunteers and donations are welcome and more information is available on Facebook

#### **16. Coleford Shedders**

Chris Palmer attended the meeting and gave the following report.

The group was set up in June 2025 and has been a great success. The group are pleased to see the arrival of Spring which will open up more opportunity for more projects like the renovation of the telephone box at Careys Mead and the old rocking horse located in the old Coleford playing field.

There are 14 signed up members with the group meeting in the shed outside @ The Hub and also using the Scout Hut when required.

## 17. Coleford Conservation Group

Andy Conn attended the meeting and gave the following report:

### Introduction:

I have previously explained the origins of the group. In summary, we have been running since 2016, starting with the Butterfly Bank, in Lower Coleford Playing Field.

In 2022, we created a small formal committee and a constitution, so that we could have a bank account and bid for grants. Since then, we have attracted about £2400 in grants, including £125 from the PC.

### Recent Work

- 1) we have continued with Summer and Winter maintenance at 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 again spread yellow rattle seed to help other wild flowers (thank you again to Chris and Mary Pearce amongst others for permission to collect).
- 3) On March 22<sup>nd</sup> we carried out our third planters work session, tackling the planter in play area at the top of Highbury Playing Fields. All the new plants are edible, in case smaller visitors fancy a taste. We also refreshed the planters in the garden opposite the surgery on Church Street.
- 4) We arranged two well attended wildflower walks in May, to Edford Meadows, and July, Kilmersdon Common.
- 5) Two of the committee worked with Coleford Acoustic Club and the owners of Church Farm to hold a third wassail second wassail event in February. Attendance reached about 70 people.
- 6) We attended Mells Village Day (May) and the Coleford Flower and Veg Show (July), plus the Vobster Allotments Open Day. We held an open morning at the Tree Nursery project site in January.

### New Projects – Tree Nursery and Swift Nest Boxes

- 7) A lot of progress has been made at the native tree nursery, at the Vobster allotment site. We would like to thank the Parish Council for renting us the triangle of land there. This is a long-term project, needing lots of research, and some trial and error. But more and more seeds have germinated and are being grown on. A number of trees have been given to local hedging projects and more will follow soon.
- 8) We have also started a project to provide nest boxes for swifts at suitable houses in the village. Initial publicity has led to requests for about 20 boxes. We are preparing a grant bid to cover the cost of materials. We are talking to the Coleford Shedders about help with assembling the boxes.

Finally, we have enjoyed working with the Parish Council and feel that we all gain from this.

Contacts – Our details are often in Parish Magazine. We have a Facebook page and an e mail list.

## 18. Holy Trinity Church

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

2025 was a very hard year as Clarissa the vicar had left and we were waiting as a parish to see what would happen to us. During one of the storms in January a tree came down in the churchyard making another tree unstable; this had to be dealt with as the tree had uprooted and left graves bare. On the bright side we had good services with the children from Bishop Henderson at Easter and Christmas, with the church nearly full with many parents attending.

We had to go through the process of joining with Midsomer Norton St Johns which took several months, and in January there was a service at Kilmersdon to install Guy Scott as our joint vicar as priest in charge. We shall now move forward in 2026 with more stability.

The Friday Friendship Café every other week helps to keep the funds going for the church, but our financial situation is not secure. Any members of the community who can help with funding please get in touch.

We always look forward to seeing new faces in the church.

## 19. @ The Hub

Philip Ham attended the meeting and provided the following report.

The Hub has had a busy year with bookings and use up. We are faced with rising costs like everyone, especially water, electricity and gas. We also have maintenance and the insurance on the building, and protection from damage to the Hub and those using it, and the trustees.

We have just launched an appeal to raise £15,000 towards improvements and maintenance. We have started work with new hot air hand dryers and hot water in the toilets, purchased from two new cookers. From the 30th March to 30th April, we are decorating and spring-cleaning the hall and kitchen. Any volunteers will be welcomed. Just let me or Henry Banks know if you can help a day, half a day, or a few hours. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be supplied.

The Hub's constitution states we will help the Youth Club as much as we can. The YMCA run the club for us, but as we all know costs keep rising, so our commitment to them gets bigger. Please support us, use the Hub and make the community a better place

**20. Date of the next Annual meeting of the Parish**

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2027

Meeting closed at 21.25hrs

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

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Dated 24<sup>th</sup> March 2027

**POST MEETING NOTE:**

**The following report was received prior to the meeting which but it was not read out on the night due to an oversight by the Clerk.**

**21. Coleford Theatre Group**

Heather Allen did not attend but shared the following report

We had a very Year in 2025 with a wonderful VE day Show held at the Legion and we had a full house at the Legion to watch and everyone left singing the songs and had smiles on their faces for a wonderful night.

Our next event was the Murder Mystery written by one of our cast members we had a full house of a 100+ people sat down with a meal.

We proudly then started rehearsing for our Pantomime Peter Pan to run for 4 nights and a matinee at the legion and we sold out nearly every performance and we would like to thank you that carry's on and supports use without your support we wouldn't be able to do all these things.

So, we started 2026 with thinking of different things to do so we came up a variety night in May tickets will be available soon at £5 each and rehearsals are well on the way. Another Murder Mystery is being rehearsed for June .

We have also picked a pantomime for November and scripts have been looked at so people can get the feel of the parts that they would like to do.

We must thank everyone for their support but especially the Legion for a lovely venue which would be greatly missed by the village if they couldn't stay open and this is where the people over the village and surrounding areas need to support anything that is put on at the legion.