

Parish Council of Coleford

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 8th December 2021

Present

Cllr Ham (Chairman presiding) Cllrs Allen, Bell (Part), Drescher, Evans, Paterson, Pearce and Townsend.

There were no members of the public present. The Clerk Vickie Watts taking the minutes

1. Public Forum

1.1 It was reported that the street light numbered 2 on Lawrence Road was not working.

Action: Clerk to report Somerset County Council.

1.2 It was reported that there had been a reoccurrence of waste food being discarded on the green at Careys Mead.

Action: Clerk to report to Mendip District Council.

1.3 It was noted that the hedge just after the entrance of Lipyeate House has become overgrown.

Action: Cllr Townsend to contact the homeowner and request that the hedge be cut back.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Barrett, Banks and Turner which were accepted by the Chair.

Cllr Harding and Talbot did not attend.

3. Declaration of Interest and Dispensations granted since last meeting

Cllr Drescher declared an interest in Agenda item 7 the planning application 2021/2634/HSE.

4. Approve Minutes of Parish Council meetings held on the 10th, 18th and 24th of November 2021

The minutes from the meetings had been circulated to all Councillors for consideration. A small amendment was suggested to the minutes from the 10th November. Everyone present agreed that all three sets of minutes then accurately reflected the meeting and were duly approved and signed by the Chair.

Vote: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to upload to the website.

5. Matters arising

All actions had been completed or would be discussed as an agenda item later in the meeting apart from:

5.1 A working party comprising of the Clerk in conjunction with Cllr Ham, Pearce, Drescher and Allen will meet to review the Climate Emergency Grant application to consider what changes

might need to be resubmitted to Somerset County Council for approval. The working party will also consider what soil samples or test trenches should be completed to ensure that the potential site is appropriate for development into allotments. Soil sampling could be extensive or basic with the price fluctuating according to requirements – the level of testing will be agreed during the meeting of the working party.

5.2 The budget and precept will be discussed at the January meeting.

5.3 The Clerk to share the Holcombe Emergency Plan with all Councillors.

Action: Clerk to action outstanding matters arising

6. Reports

6.1 PCSO

No report had been received.

6.2 Somerset County Council report

The Clerk had previously circulated the report from County Cllr Ham, as follows:

Coronavirus infection rates: As of 29th November, the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 68,307 (18% up from 57,072 on 30th September) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 927. The rate per 100,000 stands at 435.2 (709.7) for Somerset with Mendip at 564.1 (853.9), Sedgemoor at 418.1 (653.5), South Somerset 505.5 (668.3) and SW&T at 276.6 (713.0). The number of total deaths across the County is currently 8% above the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 0.8 and 1.0. Infection rates in Somerset continue to be very high. With the new Omicron variant, it is important, even for those who have had both jabs, to remember to follow Government guidance on wearing masks, to continue to observe Social Distancing and to always ventilate indoor areas.

Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline: A single phone number continues to be available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus-related support. 0300 790 6275, is open seven days a week from 8am to 6pm.

Vaccination programmes roll-out: Somerset continues to have one of the highest vaccination rates in the country with the latest figures showing over 91.3% of the 18+ population having had one dose of vaccine and 88.3% having had both doses. To date 83% of over 80-year olds have had the booster with 56% of all over 50. Work is focusing on Children aged 12-15 years old where the current vaccination level is 49.7%. In total, in Somerset 126,000 doses (including boosters) are being delivered a week.

Local Government Reorganisation: Following the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (now renamed Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities DLUHC)) decision to support the move to a single Unitary Council across Somerset the transition programme, lead teams and governance structure have been agreed by all Councils. A LGR Joint Committee to oversee the transition sat for the first time on 5th November 2021 and will meet again on December 17th. A Joint Scrutiny Board is now being formed by approval through the five Councils. The Advisory Board met for the third time in Donyatt on 25th November. It is expected that statutory orders will be laid before Parliament in January 2022 with an agreed vesting date for the new authority as April 2023.

The Queens Platinum Jubilee: In 2022, Her Majesty The Queen will become the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking seventy years on the throne. To help Somerset play its part in celebrating The Queen's legacy, a new website has been launched:

<https://platinumjubileesomerset.org.uk/>. There are already various plans for celebrations across the County to mark the Jubilee, including a four-day national Bank Holiday weekend from Thursday 2 June through to Sunday 5 June. The Platinum Jubilee Somerset website features information about how individuals and communities can get involved either through the Queen's Green Canopy scheme, by registering a beacon, or by organising a street party.

Community renewal funds: Eight projects in Somerset are to benefit by more than £3.6m thanks to successful bids to the Government's UK Community Renewal Fund. The County Council invited applications from a wide range businesses and organisations across the county for submission to

Government in June this year. The successful projects include ‘Unlocking Somerset Prosperity (£726,000) which provides innovative support for 210 businesses across the County; Bridgwater Carnival Workshops Design and Feasibility (£270,300) and Social Enterprise Support Programme for Somerset (£601,399) which helps community and voluntary Groups to build greater resilience.

Reaching Carbon Zero (1): Somerset County Council has commissioned Climate Guide to run a series of free, accredited Carbon Literacy training days for City, Town, and Parish Councils. The training is designed to help local authorities understand the actions they can take to help combat climate change effectively. SCC has also launched its new Climate Emergency webpage <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/> which will provide a hub for anyone wanting information about Somerset’s work towards tackling climate change including the latest environmental news for Somerset, information and tips for individuals and organisations on how they can reduce their carbon footprints.

Reaching Carbon Zero (2): A new £7.3 million primary school is set to become Somerset’s first net zero carbon school, and only the third ‘passivhaus’ school in the south west. The new 420-place primary school, which includes a 60-place nursery, will serve the Orchard Grove housing development in Comeytrove has been designed by architect firm Stride Treglown to minimise any environmental impact in line with Somerset’s commitment to achieve carbon zero by 2030. The England coastal path: SCC’s Rights of Way team have completed work on a major new section of the English Coastal Path around the Doniford section. The decision to create the footway was part of the original establishment works for the England Coast Path and marks the completion of one of the last pieces of major work on the England Coast Path in Somerset

Applications for school places 2022: All children starting school for the first time in September 2022, as well as those moving between infant and junior or first and middle school applications must be submitted by Saturday 15 January 2022. www.somerset.gov.uk/admissions

6.3 Mendip District Council report

District Cllr Townsend reported as follows:

The Modified Local Plan Part 2, Sites and Policies, is being presented to Full Council for adoption on 20th December. A key objective of LPP2 is “To ensure there are sufficient sites to enable a rolling 5-year supply of housing land in the District”. In the Gladman appeal Mendip admitted that there is only a 3.5-year supply even after adoption of the new Plan. This has been in preparation for 6 years, and it is 29 months since the revised housing numbers were published by the Government. As Coleford suffered in the Gladman case, in order to secure refusal, it is necessary to prove the development would cause “significant and demonstrable harm” – this is a very high bar. Beckington PC are objecting strongly to a site included in LPP2 which has already been rejected by an appeal inspector.

This week is the live appeal proceeding at Mendip by Gladman against the Chilcompton refusal for 90 houses. The live arrangement gives a much better platform for the full and frank exchange of views. Appeals have also been lodged for developments at Stoke, White Post and Leigh and a new application has been submitted by Gladman for 255 houses at Writhlington of which 40 are in Mendip. All of these are outside development limits in LPP2. Questions are asked as to whether this document has any value.

Phosphates – An update has been received on the progress towards overcoming the pollution effects on the sensitive sites on the Levels/Moors. Currently some 150 applications covering 1500 dwellings are on hold until a solution is found. It appears that a strategic solution is some way off. In the short-term mitigation plans and a nutrient credit scheme is under consideration. Despite fine words from Mendip the effects of this delay will inevitably put pressure on developments in the north east of the District.

FINANCE

Government is expected to produce its Local Government financial settlement details within a week and that should be translated into the County, District and Parish numbers by Full Council on 20th December.

CPRE

District Cllr Townsend attended the AGM of the Somerset Branch in Somerton on 19th November. Mariella Frostrup was introduced as the new Chair to replace the long serving, Chris Lewis. The signs are that she will raise the profile of the CPRE locally. The main themes were Rewilding and Brownfield development. Contact was also made with their planning specialist.

Unitary Update

The Election will take place on 5th May 2022 which will include Parish Council elections on the same day. The Somerset Council election will use the same division areas but will elect 2 Councillors for each division instead of one which will make a total of 110 Councillors.

District Councillors will stay in place until 1st of April 2023.

Three Committees have been set up to take the process forward until 5th May 2022. They are:

1. Chief Executive and Leaders of District and Chief Executive, Leaders and Senior Cabinet members of Somerset County Council.
2. Advisory group.
3. Scrutiny group from District and Somerset County Council members

All Change Orders to are to be completed and passed through Parliament before the end of February.

Bus Service Improvement Project

Cllr Paterson and Ham attended the recent meeting. Cllr Paterson gave the following report:

The group of representatives is made up of approximately 100 local reps from parishes made up of both councillors and parishioners. There are two aims:

1. To encourage people to use buses and
2. Increase funding to improve the service.

Central Government have pledged 7.2 billion pounds to meet these aims and a bid for 165 million over a 5-year period has been placed by Somerset. In London £6.50 of council tax is spent per person on public transport, which compares to just £1.45 per person in Somerset. This is one of the lowest amounts in the country. A huge amount of work has gone into researching the local bus service and identifying ways it could be improved. It is hoped that if the bid is successful that improvements could start as soon as April 2022.

The 184 bus which serves Coleford been identified as one which should be improved. Coleford has 5 bus stops each way through the village, some of which have a shelter, others which are marked only with a pole but none have a timetable displayed. They are only shown on the village noticeboards. There are also inaccuracies within the timetables show on the internet, which is unhelpful and can cause additional expense to users.

There has been a 43% decrease in bus use since covid. There has been a loss of drivers and increased fuel costs. The peak time for use is 9.15am when customers are able to use their bus pass.

7. Planning Application

[2021/2634/HSE](#) - Erection of detached domestic outbuilding (secure storage and garden room) with Ancillary Annexe Above Belle Vue Villa, High Street, Coleford, Radstock

Councillors had considered the plans prior to the meeting. It was noted that there had been no objections lodged. The new annexe would remain linked to the main dwelling and could not be sold off separately. After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Allen and seconded by Cllr Paterson that the application should be recommended for approval.

Vote 5 For, 0 Against, 3 Abstentions (2 Ward Councillors)

8. Planning updates including enforcement issues

Cllr Townsend gave the following report on the Gladman application:

District Cllr Ham and Townsend met with MP David Warburton on 26th November. He had received a copy of their Ward Councillors email to Mr Michael Gove the Secretary of State and had clearly taken on board our concerns. They made the point to him that the lack of a valid Local Plan raises 3 levels of concern, firstly at Coleford, secondly in Mendip as a whole, and thirdly nationwide.

Without a forward 5 year supply of housing land the only defence is to prove that any development would cause “significant and demonstrable harm” – this is the case not just for Mendip but for over half the nation’s local authorities. He undertook to take up the issue personally with Mr Gove and ask him to call it in, and probably follow up with a Question in the House. An email will be sent for an update.

District Cllr Ham and Townsend also expressed concerns about Sewerage arrangements. They provided information stating that in 2020 the number of hours of discharge from the Kings Head and main works were Ten times the permitted levels. therivertrust.org site gives all details. It was agreed that the Parish Council should also raise this with Wessex Water and Mendip.

District Cllr Townsend informed the Woodland Trust that the appeal had been lost and asked if there was any realistic chance of transplanting the Elm tree. Their reply was that it would be “very difficult, costly and unlikely to be successful”. They did thank us for our efforts in trying to save this rare specimen.

As discussed, District Cllr Townsend requested that Mendip should involve the Parish Council at an early stage in the preparation of the applications by Gladman for the approval of the reserved matter. A reply had been received stating that we would be consulted in the usual way as with any application, noting that they were likely to go to the Planning Board.

Highways are a continued concern. Discussions are taking place with Holcombe Parish Council with regards to the signage requirements for the Charlton Road and Charmborough Lane approaches. There is also new information on visibility splays which is being considered.

The press release was submitted to Somerset Live but nothing has been published. A follow up email was sent but as yet there has been no response.

Action: Cllr Townsend to draft a letter to Wessex Water and Mendip regarding the unacceptable levels of sewerage discharge and arrange a meeting with SCC Highways Engineer to discuss Highway issues relating to the Gladman application, namely Charlton Road, Charmborough Lane and Brewery Lane.

9. Highways including:

1. 9.1 Councillor updates – Cllr Ham had reported the poor surface at the various passing points along Charity Lane. There were no specific updates.

There were no specific dates given by Somerset Highways for the white lining request within the village, however it has been noted that there has been some taking place locally.

2. 9.2 Report of any new issues to be reported – There were none.

10. Finance

3. 10.1 Bank Reconciliation

Cllr Bell had checked the bank reconciliation for November and found it to be in order. The December reconciliation will be checked in the same way prior to the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to drop Bank Reconciliation to Cllr Bell

10.2 Decision on whether to accept the Mendip District Council Community fund grant of £20000
The application submitted for funding from Mendip District Council Connecting Communities grant has been successful and an offer of £20K has been received. It would be expected that the grant would be utilised within 18 months of accepting the grant.

It was agreed that the grant should be accepted by the deadline of the 10th December. The working party will continue to work hard on securing further grants and donations to enable the project to come to fruition.

Vote 10 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to confirm acceptance of the grant before the 10th December

4. 10.3 Invoices approved for payment:

The following invoices were presented for payment:

Mark Reynolds – Gladmans Consultation Work	£1320.00 – Paid 24/11
No 5 Chambers Ltd – Gladman Consultation Work	£1440.00 – Paid 24/11
HMRC	£ 31.37
Glasdon UK – Sacks for dispenser	£ 97.65
V Watts - Clerks Expenses	£ 61.46
Jenny Ham – Community pay back materials	£ 9.40
Reed Agriservices – Community pay back materials	£ 311.00

All Councillors agreed that the payments should be made.

Vote 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

11. Consider quotes for setting up Parish Council email addresses for Councillors with associated security

The Clerk has spoken with the lady that deals with the emails for Cranmore Parish Council and she believes that Gmail is a consistent and safe method to communicate. It is therefore proposed that each Councillor has a PC email address using Gmail which the clerk will set up. Each Councillor should then ensure that the antivirus / malware software such as AVG is loaded on the computer with regular scans taking place.

Action: Clerk to progress.

12. Somerset Wildlife Trust Teams Wilder Community Conservation groups – Agree the Butterfly Bank should be registered.

The Somerset Wildlife Trust is trying to establish a network of community conservation groups, under the heading “Team Wilder” and it is being proposed by a resident that the butterfly bank group would be a good candidate to be registered. It is hoped that it may attract more volunteers and ideas and the resident is happy to make the application. This would be seen as a joint effort by local volunteers and the Parish Council.

It was agreed that this was a good idea and was supported by all Councillors.

Vote 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to notify the resident so that the application can be submitted.

13. Review tree Survey and agree works to be completed

The Clerk confirmed that the tree survey had been received although there was a small area of Council owned land which had been omitted from the survey. The Clerk had been assured that this would be completed and provided to the Council within the next 2 weeks.

It was agreed that the tree survey would be circulated to all Councillors for discussion at the January meeting.

Action: Clerk to circulate the tree survey. Agenda item for January meeting.

14. Consider repair to the boundary fence at Highbury Play Area and the removal of the old picnic table at Goodeaves Play Area

It was agreed that Cllr Drescher and Cllr Allen would remove the old picnic table from Goodeaves play area and repair the boundary fence at Highbury play area.

Action: Cllr Drescher and Allen to undertake the tasks

15. Allotments

1. Discuss and agree potential sites for allotments at Vobster – including rent and terms

It was acknowledged that before being able to progress, further investigation of the site was required to ensure that it was appropriate for use as allotments. It was agreed that test trenches should be dug and soil samples completed

Action: Cllr Ham to seek contractor to complete work

2. Consider whether to progress with the Somerset County Council Emergency Climate Fund Grant

It was agreed that Cllrs Ham, Pearce, Drescher and Allen would meet to consider what changes to the original application might be required if we progress with the new site.

Action: Clerk to arrange a convenient date for the working party to meet @ the Hub

16. Meetings to attend or attended

Mendip District Council Parish Forum Tues 14/12/21 @ 6.15pm

Frome Town Council Local Community Network meeting on Zoom Thurs 16/12/21 @ 7pm

Jubilee Meeting 05/01/21 @ 7pm @ the Hub

17. Correspondence

- 1 Letter from Resident regarding continued inconsiderate parking at Underhill, Church Street. The email included photographs showing the cars which were parked in same location all weekend on the white lines and on the corner. This impacts on residents who have to endure the traffic backing up and reversing dangerously down the sharp bend as manoeuvring safely around the corner is compromised due to limited space. It also means that drivers have to negotiate the bend blindly and the footpath is difficult to access.

The resident believes that white lines will be ignored and asked if it would be possible for signage to be erected?

Action: Clerk to email the photos and email to Sara Davis to see if she is able to help with signage and the PCSO so that they can include the location within their patrols and educate anyone that they see parking badly.

2. An email had been received regarding the tree to the rear of Orchard Close which had in the past been set on fire. The Clerk confirmed that once the tree survey had been completed it would be clear whether the tree required any work.

Action: Clerk to press for the Tree Survey

3. A member of the public had emailed to raise 3 issues as follows:

- 1 It was suggested that the Council may like to progress with the new allotment using a 'No Dig' method rather than completing soil testing and using conventional methods. It was agreed that the Council needed to be sure that the soil was not contaminated and this could only be achieved by soil testing.
- 2 They were pleased to hear that a rainwater harvesting system was being installed at Goodeaves allotment but wanted the plans for the system to be made public. Councillors agreed that having

discussed the proposed system at length and having deemed it appropriate for the available area at the allotment that there was no benefit in opening it up for discussion with members of the public. The allotment holders will benefit from the system which is based on a similar design utilized by allotments in Frome.

- 3 It was requested that the Parish Council should approach the landowner of the Gladman site with a view to safeguarding the existence of the elm tree located in the boundary hedge. The Council has campaigned for the elm tree to be saved and has on 2 occasions tried to secure a tree preservation order. There has been recent communication with the Woodland Trust who believed that trying to transplant such a large tree would be very difficult, costly and unlikely to be successful.

Action: Clerk to respond to the resident

4. Steve Hodges had written a letter of thanks to the Parish Council for the funding provided for his Coleford history project and given an update on where the book will be available upon completion.
5. War Memorial Newsletter - Passed to Cllr Townsend
6. CPRE – The Countryside Charity magazine - Passed to Cllr Townsend

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

There were none.

19. Date of Next Meetings:

12th January 2022 – Monthly meeting
26th January 2021 – Planning meeting

Meeting finished at 20.52hrs