

Parish Council of Coleford

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 9th February 2022

Present

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

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

1. Public Forum

1. The Mendip Country Practice Patient meeting scheduled for the 10th February has been postponed with a date to be confirmed. Councilors were invited to send any questions that they might have regarding the practice to Cllr Townsend.
2. Complaints have again been received regarding the perils of pedestrians crossing outside the Co-op with suggestions of the creation of a pedestrian crossing from the Co-op side to the pharmacy. Cllr Townsend said that due to the lack of a pavement on the pharmacy side this, in its current format would not be possible. He agreed to raise this with Somerset Highways to establish if there were any ways this could be achieved.

Action: Cllr Townsend to ask Somerset Highways if pedestrian crossing could be created.

3. Cllr Townsend asked if Mendip District Council could be approached regarding formally adopting the road names Charmborough Lane and Cherry Gardens Lane so that signs could be produced and for them to be included on maps.

Action: Clerk to investigate signage options and put in monthly report.

4. Spray paint highlighting sites of repair work has washed from the pavement located at the first junction on the hill in Preachers Vale. Cllr Townsend said that this should have been formally recorded on the Highways system as well as marked on the road but would raise this with Charlie Higgins if not completed by the next meeting.

Action: Cllr Townsend to ask Somerset Highways

5. There has been an increase in the number of vans and cars parking on the pavement in Church Street.

Action: Clerk to ask the PCSO to monitor and act if required.

6. It was asked whether the dormer window being built at the house next to the Doctors surgery in Church Street required planning permission.
7. A metal gate was stolen some time ago from the Southern end of footpath FR720.

Action: Clerk to report to Somerset Rights of Way.

8. The steps created located in the woods on footpath FR46 are dangerous and require attention.

*Action: Clerk to report to Somerset Rights of Way.
Clerk to get 6 x Rights of Way maps laminated for new Councilors*

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Barrett which were accepted by the Chair.

3. Councilor resignation and co-option

The Clerk had received a letter from Cllr Turner confirming that after many years serving the Council, wished to resign with immediate effect. The Chairman confirmed he had spoken with Colin on the telephone and thanked him for the time he had given to being a Councilor.

The Clerk to advertise the vacancy. It is hoped that a potential new Councilor will be available to co-opt at the next meeting.

4. Declaration of Interest and Dispensations granted since last meeting

There were none.

5. Approve Minutes of Parish Council meetings held on the 12th and 26th January 2022

The minutes from both meetings had been circulated to all Councilors for consideration. It was agreed that they accurately reflected the meetings and were duly approved and signed by the Chair.

Vote: 9 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to upload to the website.

6. Matters arising

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

1. Clerk to create email addresses for Councillors

Action: Clerk to action outstanding matters arising

7. Reports

1. PCSO report

No report had been received.

2. Somerset County Council report

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

Coronavirus infection rates: As of 28th January, the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 106,569 (27% up from 83,300 on 30th December) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 977. The rate per 100,000 stands at 964.2 (766.6) for Somerset with Mendip at 766.5 (892.0), Sedgemoor at 1143.1 (756.6), South Somerset 921.3 (684.3) and SW&T at 1016.0 (770.4). The number of total deaths across the County is currently below the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 0.8 and 1.1

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 96.2% of the 18+ population having had one dose of vaccine and 93.8% having had both doses. In total 63.7% of the adult population have also received their booster.

Local Government Reorganisation: Following the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) decision to support the move to a single Unitary Council across Somerset the

Structural Changes Order was laid before Parliament on 24th January. The agreed vesting date remains 1st April 2023. The first elections to the new authority together with Somerset Town and Parish elections will be held on 5th May 2022.

County Council Revenue Budget: Somerset County Council has published its last draft proposed budget ahead of the creation of a new unitary Somerset Council in April 2023. The council is proposing major increases in investment in care services, with an increase for Adult Social Care of £18m (13%), and over £12m (also 13%) for Children’s Services. The increase in funding for Adult Social Care in part reflects the council’s recent decision to support an increase in carers pay and to provide a retention bonus for care staff in Somerset. This is intended to support the recruitment and retention of staff in a challenging job market for care services.

County Council Capital Budget: SCC is proposing to allocate £48 million for capital spending in the coming year. This includes substantial investment in measures to tackle climate change, building on the council’s successful Climate Emergency Community Fund. The council has allocated £1 million in new match funding to support the “decarbonisation” of schools – on top of the existing £7.8 million investment in decarbonising the council’s buildings, including libraries. A further £1 million has been allocated for

electric fleet vehicles and charging infrastructure. A new investment of £1 million has been allocated to local transport schemes.

Proposed Council Tax: Council Tax for SCC is proposed to rise by two per cent with a further one per cent rise for the social care precept. This compares to UK inflation in December running at over four percent and will mean that Somerset County Council continues to set one of the lowest County Tax rates in the UK.

Somerset libraries: Since libraries reopened their doors last April, Somerset Libraries have had over half a million visits and have welcomed over 16,000 new members. To encourage even more people to reconnect with library services and support communities as they start to recover from the impact of the pandemic Somerset Libraries is running two initiatives from 21st January until the 31st March. Children and young people aged 17 and under will not be charged for using any library services. This includes requesting books from other libraries, borrowing DVDs and no charges for the late return of items! The service will also be happy to clear outstanding charges, for all customers, incurred before 21st January 2022, no questions asked. To take advantage of this ‘welcome back’ offer, visit your local library before the 31st March and speak to a member of staff.

Climate change action 1: Somerset County Council has been ranked as the top county council in the UK when it comes to taking a lead on climate change. Climate Emergency UK has ranked all 409 local authorities, scoring them against nine categories, including how well councils’ plans would mitigate the impact of climate change locally, whether the climate and ecological emergency was integrated into existing policies, community engagement, climate education, scale of emissions targets, and commitments to tackle the ecological emergency. Somerset County Council was named as the top county council, meanwhile Somerset West & Taunton Council was ranked as the top district council

Climate change action 2: A grant available to help Somerset people benefit from energy efficient installations worth up to £10,000 has been extended until June 2022. The Green Homes Grant Scheme allows eligible homeowners to apply for vouchers to install climate-friendly energy saving measures such as insulation, air source heat pumps, or double glazing. The work can be worth up to £10,000, with nothing for homeowners to pay towards the cost of the works. To be eligible for the grants, the residents of the property must have a low income and the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property must be rated D, E, F or G. visit www.heatsomerset.co.uk for more information.

Somerset County Council (SCC) council tax: This will probably be 2% + 1% for adult social care. The SCC 22/23 budget shows an increase of 18m for adult social care, and 12 m for children services which amounts to 159.6 million to be spent on Adult Social care, and 105.2 million on Children Services out of total budget of 370 million. This means there is only 106 million for all other services, i.e. Highways, Maintenance of Assets, Schools, Bus subsidies, etc. We are the 4th lowest county council tax collector in England.

SCC is top of the County Council Climate change league, with Taunton and West top of the District league with Mendip in the top 10.

Bus Back Better: The 163 million applied for by SCC could be reduced as the 7.2 billion pot has been overprescribed. The amount awarded should be known by end of February and will go to Cabinet in March to agree where the improvements could be implemented after consultation.

3 Mendip District Council report

District Cllr Townsend reported as follows:

Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2)– A briefing session from Mendip Planning confirmed our fears that the lack of 5-year housing land supply could be an issue for many years. District Cllrs Ham and Townsend sought from Mendip its proposals to put in hand a plan to rectify the shortage. The response that “Officers will review in the coming months how the requirements and timescales for plan review can be progressed as a joint workstream in transition to the new Somerset authority” is not acceptable and will provide no protection to villages from speculative development. Appeals submitted against Mendip’s refusals at Leigh on Mendip, Stoke St Michael, Chilcompton and White Post will show how vulnerable they are. District Cllrs Ham and Townsend also requested confirmation of the LPP2 review programme at Cabinet on 7th February and were given no comfort by the statement “There will be a process leading to joint agreement on a review programme ahead of vesting day” – which is 1st April 2023, implying we could be over a year away from even establishing a programme.

Unitary – the Structural Change Order has now been placed before Parliament to allow both Houses to debate and approve the legal basis for the new Somerset Council to provide all services from 1st April 2023. This is scheduled to be approved in time for the local elections to proceed on 5th May this year.

4 Unitary Update

Cllr Ham gave the following report:

Unitary Scrutiny meeting: Sarah Wakefield was elected as Chair with Bob Filmer Vice Chair. The Terms of Reference and meeting protocol were agreed.

Programme update of Governance and workstreams, the six areas are:

- 1) Governance
- 2) People
- 3) Assets and Technology
- 4) Service alignment and improvement
- 5) Finance
- 6) Communities, Customers, Partnership

This has created 74 sub streams with already 150 county and district staff involved.

It was also agreed that the following was required,

Communications plan
Local Community Network pilots to be monitored
Quality assurance
Benefit management
Risk Management and Register

The budget for the transition of 18.1 m was scrutinised and agreed. It was agreed that a Finance and Asset protocol was set up for year 22/23 to protect the new Somerset Council.

All the above have now been implemented by the Full Board, at which they also agreed the funding for the Voluntary sectors the sum of 2.4 m to cover 23/24 year to provide certainty.

8. **Planning Application**

2022/0119/FUL - Construction of a Vegetable and Agricultural Equipment Store

Ravens' Drift, Lipyeate Cross To Luckington Cross, Coleford

All Councilors had considered the plans for the application prior to the discussion. It was proposed by Cllr Drescher and seconded by Cllr Paterson that the application should be approved with the following conditions:

1. There be no external lighting
2. The two containers currently on site be removed as mentioned in the submitted existing block plan
3. The site should not be used for retail purposes on the grounds of highways including access to the site
4. Landscaping and tree planting be implemented to help reduce the impact of the building

Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 2 Abstentions (Ward Councilors)

Action: Clerk to notify the planning officers of the decision

9. Planning updates including enforcement issues

There were none.

10. Highways including:

1. Councilor updates – Cllr Townsend had circulated the following highway report

The requested repairs at Brewery Lane, Vobster and at Stockhill have been completed along with some improvement at Stoke Bottom. Further repairs at the entrances to Halecombe and Whatley quarries are being progressed. A meeting with Charlie Higgins of Somerset Highways has been arranged for 10th March to review Coleford's issues.

The comprehensive list of all Gladman related highway upgrades has been submitted to County Highways

2. Consider promoting pedestrian access to Bishop Henderson School

It was agreed that the Clerk would prepare a map showing the preferred 'safe' route for children walking to Bishop Henderson school starting at the footpath with the yellow gate on Church Street which leads to Beacon View and Coal Barton to the school. This route will take parents, carers and children away from the much busier Anchor Road.

Action: Clerk to prepare map and circulate to Cllrs for comment prior to submitting to Bishop Henderson School for them to request parents to use this route.

3. Report of any new issues to be reported

There were none.

11. Finance

1. Bank Reconciliation

The Clerk to ask Cllr Bell to check the bank reconciliation for January prior to the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to drop Bank Reconciliation to Cllr Bell

2. Consider quote for replacement sign at Coleford Cemetery

The Clerk asked that this be adjourned until a future meeting to allow further quotes to be received.

Action: Agenda item for the next meeting

3. Invoices approved for payment:

The following invoices were presented for payment:

| | |
|---|---------|
| HMRC - National Insurance | £ 31.37 |
| V Watts - Clerks Expenses | £ 80.34 |
| Combe Garden Maintenance – Hedge cutting at Playing field | £300.00 |
| Cam Valley Wildlife Group – Annual membership | £ 5.00 |
| Scribe Accounting - Annual subscription starting 1 st April 2022 | £289.20 |

All Councilors agreed that the payments should be made.

Vote 9 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

12. Review and update Playing Field Trustees

The Clerk confirmed that Colin Turner and Nick Harding are no longer Councillors and therefore no longer eligible to be trustees. It was therefore proposed that Cllr Bell and Cllr Paterson would fill the vacancies.

Vote 9 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to update the charity commission website.

13. Update and discussion on the renovation of the hardcourt and proposed 3G

It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next meeting when it was hoped that further quotes would have been received.

14. Update on the levelling of the main football pitch at Highbury playing field

The Clerk outlined that Penny's had offered to level the football pitch by reducing the height at the hardcourt end and making up the land by bringing materials in at the pump track end. The slope is currently approximately 2m and would be reduced to 400mm. This could be completed at no cost to the parish, however by way of commitment they ask that the costs incurred to secure the planning permission, which would be approx. £5K are paid, but reimbursed once work has started. This gives Pennys the security that the parish is committed to the project.

It was recognised that if the permission was not granted that the Parish Council could be out of pocket with no levelling of the pitch.

After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Bell that the Parish Council should pay the costs associated with obtaining the planning permission which was seconded by Cllr Allen.

Vote 9 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to update the working party. The Council to be shown the plans as soon as they are available.

15. Consider and adopt management plan for the Butterfly bank

The Council had been asked to consider adopting an updated management plan for the butterfly bank project which seeks to maintain the slope at the top of the (Lower) Coleford Playing Field as a wildflower meadow backed by woodland, thereby supporting a wider range of butterflies, bees and other wildlife. Since the previous management plan was drawn up in 2017, essential maintenance has continued, but changes in methods and priorities have taken place.

All Councillors agreed that the new plan should be adopted for the volunteers to oversee.

Vote 9 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to update the volunteers.

16. Consider the request to employ a tree surgeon to remove some trees and branches at the butterfly bank

It was agreed that the Clerk would seek a plan of the work required and seek quotes for consideration.

Action: Clerk to progress. Agenda item for the March meeting.

17. Allotments

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

The Clerk confirmed that the site requested by the Parish Council was already being rented by Vobster Quay as additional parking and camping on a few days each year. It was agreed that a conversation should take place with their representative to establish if they would consider swapping to the field offered to the Parish Council, so that the field they are currently renting which is considered to be more fertile, could be taken on by the Parish Council for allotments. Both fields are accessible from the drive into Vobster Quay.

Action: Clerk to progress the enquiry. Agenda item for the March meeting.

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

Sam Shaw of Somerset County Council has confirmed extra time will be allowed to investigate new location for the allotments.

Action: Clerk to keep SCC informed.

18. Meetings to attend or attended

01/02/22 @ 7pm - Frome Town Council Local Community Network meeting – Email received following up on the meeting has been circulated to all Councillors for perusal.

17/02/22 @ 6 – 9pm – Town & Parish Council Conference – Connecting connections developing peer to peer support. Clerk to attend.

19. Correspondence

26/01/22 - Email from Mendip District Council regarding the pending elections and charges.

13/01/22 – Email received from resident following up on request for highway improvements on Church Street, in particular near the Hub. Cllr Townsend will discuss with Somerset highways.

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

1. Cllr Drescher to check the light bulb above the defibrillator located at the Co-op to see if it needs replacing or is broken.
2. Clerk to find new contractor to complete the construction of the rainwater harvesting at Goodeaves.
3. Emergency plan to be an agenda item for the March meeting.

21. Date of Next Meetings:

23rd February 2021 – Planning meeting

9th March 2022 – Monthly meeting

Meeting finished at 21.30hrs