

Parish Council of Coleford

Miss V Watts
Clerk to the Council
Gallant Hill Farm, Foxcote, Radstock, BA3 5YB
Tel: 07971 516916 / 01749 880428
Email: clerkcolefordsomerset@gmail.com

Minutes of the Parish Council Virtual Meeting held on Wednesday 9th June 2021

Present

Cllr Ham (Chairman presiding) Cllrs Banks, Barrett, Conn, Evans, Harding, Pearce, Talbot and 10 members of the public attended.

1. Public Forum

1. A Parishioner attended the meeting to speak against the proposed allotments at Highbury Playing Field. He said that he was representing many parishioners who felt strongly that the playing field was not the right site for the project and the field should remain an area that can be used by all. He confirmed that a petition is being put together and will be lodged with both the Parish Council and Mendip District Council to show the strength of feeling against the project. Surveys of the site in the past have shown that it is made up of ash rather than soil which will not be suitable for productive allotments. If the project was to go ahead it would have a major impact on the village day which is held on the field. The resident stated that the Parish Council had a duty to protect the facility for recreation. People are not necessarily against allotments but this is not the right location. When the next meeting is held the Council should ensure that it is accessible to all, held in person rather than virtually using Zoom.
2. Another resident said that if the allotments were to go ahead it would be impossible to hold the village day due to the area lost to the scheme. The playing field should be kept for recreation for the well being of the residents.
3. A parishioner highlighted that parking on Highbury Street was already bad. Allotment holders will drive to the site and add to the problem on Highbury Street and cause obstruction to the commercial vehicles accessing the industrial site and farm on Dark Lane. People will not walk to the site so if they are driving to Highbury, they may as well drive to the potential site in Vobster.
4. Another resident echoed what was said regarding parking but added that the playing field should not be carved up further. They said this had already started with the construction of the pump track and the storage container making the lower end of the field noisy for the farmers cattle.
5. It was stated that if the project goes ahead and the work is likely to take 31 man power days to complete, then it should be subject to Construction Design and Management requirements.
6. The Parish Council was asked to consider how the people who undertook the original negotiations to secure the land for the creation of the playing field for use by Coleford residents for football and recreation, might feel about the project. It should not go ahead.
7. The Clerk reported that a message of thanks had been received regarding how clean the Vobster to Coleford road was after the road sweeper had attended. Cllr Ham confirmed that he had seen the road sweeper sweeping the village and had done a good job.

8. A resident requested that the verges be cut back at the junction of Charmborough Lane with the Holcombe/Charlton Road to improve visibility. Cllr Pearce said that it was reported at the Highways meeting that day and it had been marked for emergency work which should be completed with 24hrs.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and said that the Council had listened to the points raised about the allotments. An open meeting would be held on a date to be agreed. Most members of the public left the meeting 19.45hrs

9. Cllr Conn mentioned that Coleford House gardens will be open on Sunday the 13th June.
10. Mrs Pearce attended the meeting and outlined the Reading Recovery Scheme that she wished to provide within the village. There are 2 courses 1) Aimed at preschool age to prepare them for starting school in September and 2) Those already at school but for whatever reason would benefit from additional support to improve their reading skills. The courses will be run 5 days a week for 6 to 8 weeks for 1hr each morning. Children will be in groups of 4 and parents will pay a small contribution towards the lesson. The scheme has been promoted to local schools Kilmersdon, Mells and Bishop Henderson. Mrs Pearce is asking the Parish Council for a grant of £300 towards the cost of the materials which will be discussed as an agenda item later in the meeting.
11. Cllr Pearce was concerned to hear about the incident where a small child was nearly hit by a Batemans lorry on Anchor Road. This happened on the stretch where there is no pavement between Anchor Close and Farley Dell. Somerset Highways have been notified. The Small Improvement Scheme to create a new pavement has been delayed due to a technical issue but they are now trying to find an emergency resolution in light of this recent incident. It was agreed that the Clerk should write to the CEO and Chairman of Batemans to express concern over the recent incident resulting from lorries accessing and leaving Springwater Farm. The letter should include that it was believed that the deadline for activity at this site has passed.

Action: Clerk to write to Batemans regarding near miss

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

Cllr Drescher, Hanney, Allen, Townsend and Turner had sent apologies which were accepted by the Chair.

3. Declaration of Interest and Dispensation granted since last meeting

Cllr Pearce declared an interest in Agenda item 11.2 and Cllr Conn in Agenda item 11.5.

4. Approve Minutes of Parish Council meetings held on the 28th April 2021 and 5th May 2021

The minutes from the meetings had been circulated to all Councillors for consideration. It was agreed that they accurately reflected the meetings and all 3 sets of minutes were approved.

Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstention

Action: Clerk to upload to the website.

5. Matters arising

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

- Clerk to arrange a skip for Goodeaves for a village clean up
- Cllr Ham to follow up on the car sales being conducted from the Royal British Legion car park
- Suggestion of the installation of a bin next to the bench at the small green area at the entrance to Beacon View.
- Notify enforcement of the near miss with the school child and the Batemans lorry.

Action: Clerk to undertake tasks

6. Reports

1. PCSO – A newsletter had been received and circulated to all Councillors. It did not give specific information relating to Coleford.

Action: Clerk to ask when the next PSCT meeting will take place.

2. Somerset County Council report

County Cllr Ham circulated the following report prior to the meeting:

Coronavirus infection rates: As at 28th May the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 20,455 (up from 20,272 on 30th April) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 800 (796). The rate per 100,000 stands at 5.5 for Somerset with Mendip at 5.2, Sedgemoor at 8.9, South Somerset 3.6 and SW&T at 5.2. The number of total deaths across the County is currently 8% below the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 0.8 and 1.1.

Despite significant progress and even those who have had both jabs it is vitally important to remember, to observe Hands-Face-Space and to Ventilate indoor areas at all times.

Road map out of lockdown: The final stage out of lockdown due on (or after) 21st June is subject to Government assessment on four key criteria:

- the vaccine deployment programme continues successfully
- evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated
- infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS
- the assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new variants

By this date the Government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact and to reopen remaining premises, including nightclubs. The easing of restrictions on large events, performances and life events such as weddings will also be subject to the analysis of the outcomes from certain pilot events.

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 programme roll-out: Somerset has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country with the latest figures showing 324,147 having received at least their first vaccination or 77.5% of the 16+ population. 246,983 (53.3%) have received their second dose. Take up rates of both doses is very high: 80+ (95.8%), 75-79 (100%), 70-74 (97.7%), 65-69 (86.2%), 60-64 (73.0%), 55-59 (50.4%) and 50-54 (47.4).

One Somerset: An announcement on the future of local government in Somerset is expected from the Government in late June/ early July. For more information visit: www.onesomerset.org.uk

Extra investment into Public Health: Somerset County Council (SCC) is allocating an additional £10m to embed public health across all areas of council services. The major investment will include £2m to support Somerset communities – helping address anxiety and those with mild mental health issues. £2m expanding Somerset's expert health protection programme including controlling outbreaks, managing testing, providing localised contact tracing, and supporting businesses and communities. Some funding will be invested in research and work to improve local understanding of Covid and the changing needs of the Somerset. A further £500,000 will be made available for town and parish councils to help them reconnect with their communities by safely reopening facilities like halls, rooms and other sites with good prevention control measures in place.

Summer activities for Years 11: Somerset students heading from Year 11 into Year 12 will have access to a wide range of free exciting educational opportunities this summer. There is a mixture of virtual and face-to-face events and activities to choose from taking place across the county including Kilve Court, Charterhouse, and other key venues across Somerset. These will include team-building exercises and physical activities such as climbing and low-ropes, as well as wellbeing and 'ready to study' sessions. Registration is now live via: www.somersetworks.vfairs.com

Rights of Way: During the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a big rise in the number of people using the county's 9,000 public rights of way across the network which totals 3,843 miles (6,186 km). This has meant a huge upsurge in the number of reports being received; at times double that from previous years. Through the Rights of Way team and nearly 400 volunteers the network's 'easy to use' grading has risen to 85.7%, the highest since records began in 2003 when the percentage was just 39.2%. For anyone interested in helping the team you can find out more about at www.volunteering.somerset.gov.uk

Donate a toothbrush: National Smile Month (which runs to 17th June) is the world's largest and longest-running campaign to promote better oral health. It aims to promote key tips and advice, helping keep everyone's smile healthy. This year Somerset County Council is encouraging people to think about adding a toothbrush and toothpaste when they donate food to their local Foodbanks. Poor oral health is largely preventable and good habits of brushing twice a day should be taught from when a baby's first tooth shows through.

New School for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: Construction has finished on Polden Bower School, a brand new £23m Somerset County Council funded state-of-the-art school in Bridgwater which is clearly visible from the M5. The project is part of a wider SCC's programme to boost provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in the county and caters for 160 students aged 4-16 with complex needs. Primary aged children are due to start on site in June, with older children following in July so that they get the accustomed to their new environment before the start of the new school year in September 2021.

Winter Gritting Summary: In the 2020/21 winter season SCC's fleet of 23 gritters were needed on 66 occasions when freezing temperatures were forecast, treating around 900 miles of road each time to help prevent ice forming. This included additional gritting to ensure safe passage to vaccination and testing sites. The team covered 70,200 miles, a significant increase from previous years when they covered 44,000 miles in 2019/20 and 32,800 miles in 2018/19. The lowest road temperature was recorded at -6.1 degrees in the Mendip Hills on 10th February 2020.

3. Mendip District Council report

District Cllr Ham and Townsend submitted the following joint report:

UNITARY Poll - Following Mendip's Full Council decision to proceed with their poll despite the warnings of the Secretary of State the voting papers were sent out to all electors. Unfortunately, the document enclosed with the papers giving further information about the One Somerset option pointed electors to a spoof website containing inappropriate material condemning One Somerset and the Leader of Somerset County Council (SCC). The letter from the Secretary of State dated 24-5-21 describes the material as "offensive and contains sexist and derogatory depictions of women" and goes on to say that this "risks undermining the reputation of local government in this country". The leader of Mendip District Council (MDC) explained that it was the fault of bad proof reading by SCC, who had nothing to do with the poll, and also by their independent contractors for apparently not spotting the omission of 2 words which by pure coincidence led electors to the spoof site.

The result of the poll was published on 7-6-21 with voters electing by 2 to 1 to select the Stronger Somerset option for 2 separate unitaries, East and West Somerset. However, on a turnout of 26% this means that only 1 in 6 electors in the county voted for this option. The decision of the Secretary of State is expected shortly.

UNITARY Meeting - A further meeting was chaired by Frome Town Council on 25-5-21. Progress was made in completing the Matrix of activities to be covered and the level at which they should be managed. Key issues were: the willingness and ability of lower levels to manage services, the allocation of funding to cover services, the allocation of assets e.g., car parks, how to engage our communities in the process, what can we learn from neighbouring unitaries such as Wiltshire and Dorset. Coleford PC may wish to set up a Unitary working group to provide a focus for this work.

PLANNING - The Inspector's Final report on Local Plan Part 2 was due at the end of April, then May, now we are told it is July. Mendip have been queried on this and they believe it is nothing sinister, probably a temporary reallocation of work for our Inspector. It is still scheduled for adoption by Mendip at September's Full Council meeting. We still have no date for the hearing of the Gladman appeal and the Springwater Farm appeal has not reached a Start date yet.

Cllrs Ham and Townsend have insisted that the planned extension to 48 Farley Dell be referred to the Planning Board after it was recommended for refusal by Mendip's Planning Officer despite the Parish Council's recommendation to accept. This will be heard by the Board on 16th June.

RECYCLING - Recent complaints about missed collections have been referred to Mendip's Group Manager for Neighbourhood Services for investigation.

CARBON NEUTRAL - Mendip's Cabinet on 7-6-21 reviewed the propose indictive Pathway to Carbon Neutral by 2030. The report conceded that the most realistic prospect would be to achieve a 30% reduction from current levels. Further reductions would require significant government intervention. Even to achieve the 30% figure would require the erection of 31 x 450ft high 2.5MW wind turbines in the district. As the Mendips are the windiest location in the district this could see one placed every half mile between Masbury and Norton St Philip.

HIGHWAYS – District Cllr Townsend and Cllr Pearce met with Somerset Highways on the morning of 9th and will provide an update at the PC meeting in the evening. Top of our long agenda are highway safety issues on Anchor Rd and by the Duke of Cumberland.

7. Update on Unitary Debate and any meeting with Frome Town Council

Report given by District Cllr Townsend in the Mendip District Council report.

The next meeting will take place in approx. 1 month.

8. Planning Applications

8.1 [2021/1163/LBC](#) - Replacement of all external windows and doors with like for like on the main dwellinghouse. Brick House Farm, Brewery Lane, Holcombe
All Councillors had considered the plans prior to the meeting. After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Conn and seconded by Cllr Barrett that there was no objection but the decision should be left to the Planning Officer.

Vote: 8 For; 0 Against & 0 Abstentions

8.2 [2021/1026/FUL](#) -Creation of allotments and associated works
Playing Field Orchard Close Coleford Frome Somerset
Postponed until the June Planning meeting.

Action: Clerk to add to the Agenda

9. Planning updates

2021/0524/HSE – Proposed Dormer Extension at 48 Farley Dell, Coleford. The application has been referred to the planning board for the decision.

10. Update on Highways including:

Cllrs Pearce and Townsend met with Somerset Highways Engineer Charlie Higgins and reported the following items:

- 1) HGV signage, Dark Lane and approaches
- 2) Potholes, south end of Cherry Gardens Lane
- 3) Charmborough Lane - edge erosion
- 4) Stoke Bottom, potholes, edge erosion
- 5) Soho, junction signage
- 6) Anchor Rd footpath, SIS
- 7) Co-op junction, SIS
- 8) Holcombe, Duke of Cumberland, signage, Barlake Lane obstruction
- 9) Verge Cutting, Charmborough Lane to Charlton Rd, plus Mells straight
- 10) Ham Hill, potholes various
- 11) Stockhill, overhanging foliage.
- 12) Farley Dell, hidden signage
- 13) Drain jetting

It was confirmed that the verges on the A and B roads are currently being cut with the C and D roads due to be completed by the end of July. An emergency order to cut back the hedge/verge at the junction of Charmborough Lane and Charlton Road had been made meaning it will be cut within 24 hours.

The rural drains are to be cleared twice yearly. If you see any that are blocked then please report them to Cllr Pearce or Townsend.

Cllr Barrett asked if there had been any news regarding the over hanging trees on the Vobster to Coleford Road. Cllr Pearce confirmed that Charlie Higgins did not consider this to be a concern at present.

Cllr Conn reported that the speed limit sign on Doors Hill is obscured by foliage and has been hit causing it to twist around the post.

Action: Cllr Pearce to report to Somerset Highways

Cllr Banks reported that the recently renovated sign at Lipyate is inside the fence amongst a hedge. Although it was cut back for the renovation work it is again overgrown. Can we get Somerset Highways to reclaim the land and sign? It was agreed that in the first instance Cllr Townsend will approach the homeowners and if required will request that Sara Davies of Somerset Highways takes on the request.

Action: Cllr Townsend to liaise with landowner and Sara Davies if required.

11. Finance

11.1 Consider quote to make safe the play tower at Goodeaves

Alvian Ltd provided a quote for remove the roof of the play tower for £295. This would involve re-sighting the firemans pole. After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Barrett and seconded by Cllr Conn that the quote should be accepted and the work carried out.

Vote: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstained

Action: Clerk to instruct the contractor.

11.2 Discuss whether to support the Reading ready Scheme with a £300 grant

Councillors had heard how Mrs Pearce proposed to run the scheme to help children to be more prepared for school in September or to brush up on the skills learnt during their first year at school. Mrs Pearce intends to have 4 to 6 children per group which will run 5 days a week for 6 – 8 weeks.

It was proposed by Cllr Conn and seconded by Cllr Evans that £300 should be awarded to the scheme.

Vote: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstained

11.3 Discuss request from Bishop Henderson School for the Spiritual Garden to mark the 50th Anniversary of the school

Councillors considered the applications which had previously been rejected by the small grants team last winter. After discussion it was proposed By Cllr Ham and seconded by Cllr Evans ‘-that in light of difficult budget restrictions the best the Council could offer was £500 which had been previously promised sometime ago in support of the Bishop Henderson cycle shed.

Action: Clerk to send the Cheque

11.4 Discuss whether to award a grant towards the cost of producing Steve Hodges book about Coleford

Cllr Banks had read parts of Steve’s book about Coleford which he said was thorough and well referenced. It was Mr Hodges hope that the book would be published with copies being held at Somerset Heritage Centre at Taunton, Frome Library, Bishop Henderson School, The Royal British Legion, The Kings Head and the Eagle. The book will also be available online.

It was proposed by Cllr Banks and seconded by Cllr Harding that a donation of £250 be made to help with the production of the book.

Cllr Evans left the meeting at 21.00hrs

Vote: 8 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to establish who the cheque is to be made payable

11.5 Accounts approved for payments

The following invoices were presented for payment:

V Watts - Clerk Expenses	£ 47.60
HMRC – National Insurance	£ 31.37
Hill & Hill – Grass cutting	£240.00
LSJ Gardening services – Grass cutting	£630.00
Chris Ingrem – Fingerpost renovation	£130.00
Mary Pearce – Reading Scheme	£296.05
Andy Conn – Allotment Planning fees	£290.20

It was proposed by Cllr Ham and seconded by Cllr Banks that the invoices should be paid.
Cllrs Conn and Pearce both declared an interest so did not vote.

Vote: 5 For, 0 Against, 2 Abstained

12. Discuss how to proceed with potential project to update the Hard Courts with Astro turf type surface

It was agreed that this will be adjourned until a new date to be confirmed

Action: Clerk to reschedule

13. Play areas - Update on Goodeaves vandalism including police action and the insurance claim

The Clerk confirmed that the insurance claim has been settled and the payment of £1841 has been received in the bank. The PCSO had provided to the Clerk letters of apology from each of the young people and it is hoped that they have learnt a valuable lesson from the incident. Cllr Conn said that the Police have done a good job having taken the incident seriously and followed it through with extensive investigation and worked with the youths to make them understand the implications of their actions on the wider community. It was agreed that a letter of thanks would be sent to the PCSO thanking him for his assistance with this matter.

Action: Clerk to write a letter of thanks to the PCSO

14. Update on the Grass cutting contract

In light of Greenways withdrawing from the Grass cutting contract, the Clerk explained that LSJ Gardening Services had agreed to cut Coleford and Highbury Playing Fields and Beacon View with a tractor and topper followed by 2 further cuts with gang mower to get it back to a reasonable length. Cllr Conn and Ham agreed the charge of £630 for LSJ Gardening along with £230 to Hill & Hill who agreed to cut all of the smaller areas.

The Clerk had asked Idverde if they would be able to take on the contract at the tender price for the remains of the year but they confirmed that it was not possible although they would be keen to tender again in the future.

This meant that the only contractor who had quoted as part of the tender earlier in the year was LSJ Gardening Services. They have confirmed that they can take on the work and would be prepared negotiate on price however they would want the contract to be for 2 years and will not trim but use weed killer to kill of the grass around fence lines, play equipment and memorials. He would only be able to take on the work at a reduced price if he was able to leave the tractor locally overnight.

Councillors agreed that Cllr Conn and Ham should work with the Clerk to negotiate the best deal with LSJ Gardening Services.

Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstained

15. Discuss Halecombe Quarry Community Fund

Information has been circulated launching the 1st round of the Halecombe Quarry Community Fund which is open to support projects within the parishes of Leigh on Mendip, Coleford, Mells and Whatley. This has been promoted on Facebook and the Parish website. Any questions about completing the Application Form should be directed to the Administrator at halecombequarryfund@gmail.com or 0781 560 8169. The deadline is 31st July 2021.

16. Update on Climate Emergency Fund Grant Award

This will be adjourned until the Planning meeting.

Action: Clerk to add to the Planning Agenda

17. Discuss Tree Survey for Coleford Parish Council owned Land

The Clerk had received a quote from Hillside Trees Limited but it was agreed that a further quote should be sought to present at the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to add to the Planning Agenda

18. Consider and Approve Memorial Application

The Clerk presented 2 applications from Curtis Ilott for approval, David Wilfred Baker and Howard Edmund Moore. Both applications were within the Parish guidelines and should be approved. However, the Clerk was disappointed that both memorials have already been installed prior to the Council considering approval which is not acceptable and could cause distress to the families if there were issues with the applications.

It was agreed that the applications should be approved and that the Clerk should write to Curtis Ilott stating that in the future they must not install any memorials prior to the Parish Council approval.

Vote: 5 For, 0 Against, 2 Abstained

Action: Clerk to notify Curtis Ilott

19. Discuss whether to install a Flag Pole within the village

This will be adjourned until the July meeting.

Action: Clerk to add to the next monthly Agenda

20. Consider extending Highbury Playing Field Charity to include Coleford Playing Field

This will be adjourned until the July meeting.

Action: Clerk to add to the next monthly Agenda

21. Discuss Finger post sign renovation

This will be adjourned until the July meeting.

Action: Clerk to add to the next monthly Agenda

22. Discuss the future use of the telephone box at Careys Mead

This will be adjourned until the July meeting.

Action: Clerk to add to the next monthly Agenda

23. Meetings to attend or attended

Somerset Association for Local Councils training dates have been circulated to Councillors. Councillors to notify the Clerk if you would like to attend.

24. Correspondence

Licensing Policy & Street Trading Policy Consultation. Circulated to Councillors for them to reply as individuals if they so choose.

NHS update. Circulated to all and posted on Facebook

Somerset Waste Partnership - Letter of apology regarding the recent disruption to services resulting from lack of HGV drivers and workforce.

Mendip District Council has launched 2 funds:

- 1 There is a total of £50,000 for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Fund, where community organisations can apply for up to £2,000 to fund eco projects.
- 2 The Communities Fund will help project ideas that improve and support communities. This fund is worth £350,000 in total and groups can apply for up to £2,000 for smaller projects or up to £30,000 for larger schemes.

The Clerk has circulated the information

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

The Clerk said that a slat had broken from seat of the bench located near to the Church Hall on Church Street. The Clerk had received a quote from the supplier which was £43.00 (ex VAT) and delivery would be at a cost of £12.00 (ex VAT). However, due to a large backlog of orders this replacement slat may be 5 - 6 weeks for delivery. It was agreed that as the bench was made from recycled materials it was probably best to purchase the slat from the supplier at the price.

Vote: 5 For, 0 Against, 2 Abstained

Action: Clerk to place the order.

26. Date of Next Meetings:

Wed 23 rd June 2021	Planning meeting
Wed 7 th July 2021	Meeting of the Parish Council
Wed 21 st July 2021	Annual Meeting of the Parish followed by the Planning meeting

Meeting finished at 21.50hrs