

# Parish Council of Coleford

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**In line with government guidance and recommended social distancing and self-isolation rules for those who are vulnerable, it was agreed that this meeting would be conducted as a virtual meeting using Zoom video technology.**

## Minutes of the Parish Council Virtual Meeting held on Wednesday the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020

### Present

Councillor Philip Ham (Chairman presiding)  
Cllr Allen, Banks, Conn, Evans, Pearce and Turner.

There were no members of the public present and the Clerk, Vickie Watts was taking the minutes

### Public Forum

- PF 1 It had been reported that the grave of Richard Horler had dropped and required attention to bring the surface to the same level as the ground. The Clerk to speak with the grave digger. VW
- PF 2 The Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance clothes collection unit located at the Legion car park is full and has many bags based alongside it. Clerk to arrange for urgent collection. VW
- PF 3 A complaint had been received regarding the removal of trees to create an extension to a house at Roman Way. The trees were apparently protected by a covenant. Cllr Ham said that he would make enquiries with the contractor. PH
- PF4 It was reported that people are living in a barn at Springwater Farm. Cllr Ham said that he believed there was permission for a temporary caravan but would ask Cllr Townsend to further investigate. PH/AT

### 1 Apologies for Absence (acceptance of any reasons offered)

Cllr Barrett, Drescher and Townsend sent apologies which were accepted by the Chair.

Cllr Hanney and Talbot did not attend.

The Chairman confirmed that a letter of resignation had been received from Cllr Harding which had been accepted. The Clerk to write a letter of thanks and arrange for a notice of vacancy to be displayed on the village notice board and website. VW

### 2 Declaration of Interest and Dispensations granted since last meeting

There were none

### 3 Approve Minutes of last Parish Council meetings held on the 12<sup>th</sup> August 2020

The Clerk had circulated to all Councillors the minutes from the abovementioned meeting. It was noted that Cllr Turner did not attend and the minutes were amended to show this. It was then proposed by Cllr Banks and seconded by Cllr Turner that the minutes accurately reflected the meetings.

*Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstentions*

The Chair will sign the minutes at the earliest opportunity.  
The Clerk to upload the minutes to the website.

PH  
VW

#### 4 **Matters arising**

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

- A meeting took place regarding potential crematorium for Coleford but this has been delayed by the Covid and will not be considered for 12 months.
- The Clerk will be circulating the Grave digging policy and Cemetery policy to undertakers and the grave digger for comments.
- Cllr Barrett and the Clerk to review footpaths reports to assign repair jobs to the Ramblers and Payback team. SCC Rights of Way will be included in the conversation.
- Cllr Ham to seek advice to review tenancy agreement for Orchard Close allotments – Agenda item for October meeting
- Clerk to seek quote from Bristol Water for installation of water at Goodeaves – Agenda item for October meeting
- Consider sites for new allotments – Agenda item for October meeting

VW

MB/VW

PH  
Ag

VW/Ag

ALL/Ag

#### 5 **Reports**

- 5.1 **PCSO report** – A report had been received the Frome Rural North and South beat area and showed elevated crime figures in particular relating to violent crime. The PCSO Russ Ford confirmed that the council should not be alarmed at the figures. He said that violent crime statistics range from verbal arguments at the lower scale to the upper scale of violence with injury. He confirmed that in the beat area of Frome Rural North, there were no reports of serious assault. Lower level categories include assault without injury, malicious communication, harassment and threats.

An email had been received prior to the meeting from PC 1709 Toni Lines who is the new Beat Manager at Frome Police station working with Sgt Rachel Clark, joining the rural Neighbourhood policing team. She said that she would like to arrange a meeting with representatives to introduce herself and to have an opportunity to discuss any Parish council issues and for her to get to understand our village and how the parish council works. It was agreed that the Clerk and Cllr Ham will meet with Toni the week commencing 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Clerk to arrange.

VW

- 5.2 **Somerset County Councillor report** – County Cllr Ham reported as follows:

**Corona Virus Update:** Whilst every death is undoubtedly an absolute tragedy, the situation in Somerset has been throughout the pandemic relatively quiet compared to the rest of the Country. As at 25<sup>th</sup> August, the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 1,373 and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 203. There was one further Care Home death in late July and the current number of total deaths across the County is currently 4% below the 5-year average. The latest R value for Somerset is between 0.8 and 1.1.

**Return to School:** Children are expected to return to school over the next two weeks with the clear message from Somerset's head teachers that they are ready and can't wait to welcome the pupils back. Measures being put in place vary from school to school but include: Year group or class group bubbles; one-way systems; regular hand sanitizing and cleaning of spaces; desks organised in rows all facing the front and spaced out; outside areas divided into 'zones', which are allocated to specific groups of children plus staggered start and finish times.

**Return to School and College Transport:** SCC is following current Government guidance in relation to school and college transport. Parents and students are being advised to walk, cycle or be driven to school or college where possible. For those that use school transport Students are advised to sit with their year group and are strongly advised to wear face coverings on the bus. For college transport, routes where additional capacity is needed, SCC are laying on approx. 20 additional buses at peak times. Details are at: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/schooltransport Covid 19>

**Parish and Towns Forum:** SPARK is hosting a Forum along with SALC on the 15th September aimed at Parish & Town Councils. It will be an opportunity to showcase some of the councils in Somerset who really engaged in the Covid-19 response in their communities, coordinating local efforts and experimenting with new ways of working. SPARK and SALC are hoping that this will initiate a conversation about how Parishes can work better with the communities they serve and capitalise on the volunteering legacy from Covid-19. To register go to [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwvduqqz4tEtdXYBab\\_pbWDMGESkYf5Y7I](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwvduqqz4tEtdXYBab_pbWDMGESkYf5Y7I)

**One Somerset:** The business case to move to a Single Unitary authority across Somerset is available on [www.onesomerset.org.uk](http://www.onesomerset.org.uk) and details the reasons for the recommendations and the substantial benefits to the residents of Somerset. The business case was approved by Full Council on the 29th July for submission to the Secretary of State. Engagement and consultation activities on One Somerset will continue through the later summer and autumn.

**Public Health Nursing:** SCC's Public Health Nursing service has been nationally acclaimed by the Institute for Health Visiting for the innovative online support developed during lockdown – a time when face-to-face appointments were no longer possible. Health Visitors, who as part of their role visit new parents after having a baby, had to adopt big changes to the way they work to enable them to deliver services to new parents to offer much needed support advice and guidance, weigh-ins for new babies, antenatal, post-natal and infant feeding support and other essential contacts.

**Somerset Youth Music Group:** Thanks to a unique online project, Somerset's musical groups including students from 32 of the county's schools and colleges have put together a stunning a recording of Elbow's One Day Like This. 90 young people, with ages ranging from 8 to 21 took part. Organised by Somerset Music, the video features the Somerset County Youth Choir, Somerset County Youth Orchestra and Somerset County Youth Concert Band. The inspirational video can be found at <https://somersetnewsroom.com/2020/08/26/somerset-pupils-scale-musical-heights-with-one-brilliant-recording/>

**Armed Forces Covenant Recognition:** SCC has been awarded the Silver Award in recognition of the Council's support for the Armed Forces community. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve or have served that we will do all we can to ensure they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives. The Covenant seeks to ensure fair treatment for Regulars, Reservists, Veterans and their immediate families. Silver Award winners must actively demonstrate that servicemen and women, and their families, are not treated unfairly because they are serving in the Forces and must have an internally publicised positive Human Resources policy on employing Reservists. Further information can be found at <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/forcescovenant>

### 5.3 Mendip District Councillors report

- 5.3.1 District Cllr Townsend confirmed that most of his activities this month had been dominated by the Gladman Planning application for 63 houses off Anchor Rd. Within a week of being notified that the Officer recommendation was to Accept, with rapid support from our consultant Mark Reynolds of Context Planning, a 28 page brochure was compiled to challenge the Planning Officers conclusions.

The main issues were Mendip's wrong interpretation of current planning case law (the Holgate judgement), the harm to the countryside, ignoring Mendip's new Corporate Plan for a Greener Fairer Mendip, and most important to us, highways. The Brochure was hand delivered to all Members of the Planning Board and the issues were explained to them either on the doorstep or on their site visit. Despite our representations, Somerset Highways would not accept that the fact that their database, showing no accidents within 500m of the site over the last 5 years, is not a true picture of the dangers of the local highway network. The Brochure gave details of 32 separate accidents, compiled with great support from the Coleford Action Group

The decision of the Board to Refuse was tight, 6 versus 5, with 2 abstentions. The reason given was Harm to the Nature and Character of the Countryside, and highways was not mentioned. It is hoped this gives a good chance if it goes to appeal as you cannot conceal the fact that over 6 acres of greenfield site would be destroyed, together with 150m of mature hedgerow including a 10m high healthy semi mature Elm tree.

A report was supplied by Mendip Country Practice on how they continue to provide a comprehensive service to the patients during these difficult times.

- 5.3.2 District Cllr Philip Ham said that he wanted to say a big thank you to Cllr Alan Townsend for all of the work that he put into defending the Gladman planning application. He gave a great deal of time to the preparation of the 28 page brochure, with many of the planning board members saying that it was one of the best that they had seen. District Cllr Ham also thanked Dawn Wines for also speaking on the night. He asked if the Clerk could write a letter of thanks to Dawn from the Parish Council.

VW

District Cllr Ham said that during the Covid 19 outbreak Mendip District Council had already given £57 million in grants to support businesses and organisations.

The Stronger Somerset proposal was discussed in great detail and will go before Full Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> September for vote. Somerset County Council have submitted a 32 page document in response to the proposal.

A paper has been produced to address enhancing air quality, with the intention being to stop cars from idling their engines outside schools and reducing taxis from waiting with their engines running.

Somerset Waste are campaigning hard to raise awareness of ‘Recycle More’. There is lots of information to educate and encourage public involvement with the new scheme.

It has been agreed that all events held by the third parties on Mendip District Council land has been suspended until May 2021.

## 6 **Planning Applications**

2020/1377/VRC - Application to vary condition 2 of planning approval 2017/0600/FUL for the demolition of existing garage building and development of proposed convenience store and 1 dwelling house with associated external works.

Crossway Garage Anchor Road Coleford Frome BA3 5PG

It was noted that this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time that an application has been submitted to vary the permission given, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of which is to reduce the size although it was clear that this application is to reduce the size of the storage area and should not reduce the retail area.

It was proposed by Cllr Conn and seconded by Cllr Pearce that there was no objection to the application providing it doesn't increase the number of daily deliveries to the store.

*Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions*

It was agreed that the Clerk would write to the developer to ask if they can confirm that the Post Office counter will be incorporated as part of the store.

VW

## 7 **Planning updates**

There were none.

## 8 **Discuss Consultations on Proposed Changes to the Planning System**

Cllr Conn explained that the Government has invited comments on three documents:-

- Planning for the Future (White Paper)

- Changes to the Current Planning System (consultation paper)
- Transparency and Competition: Data and Land Control (consultation paper)

Together these set out very wide ranging changes to the planning system. The documents ask for a response to a total of 86 questions, some of which are detailed and technical. This is unmanageable. However comments need to be made on key issues.

#### The danger of sweeping changes

1. The White Paper gives the impression that the planning system is a slightly modified version of that set up in 1947. This is not true. It has been greatly changed on more than one occasion, including the introduction of national guidance notes within the last 10 years.
2. There are numerous examples of drastic changes not delivering the hoped for outcome. The “A level exams algorithm” is the most recent example. Now that LAs have local plans in place, updating would be quick, if the rules were not changed.
3. The White Paper argues that the government target of 300,000 new houses a year cannot be met due to the slowness of the planning system. Independent research shows that most housing sites are built fairly quickly. The problem seems to lie with very large sites (1000 houses plus) in metropolitan areas. Planning issues are very different in shire counties.
4. Therefore, drastic changes like those proposed should either be replaced by updating current plans, or should be tested first in larger urban areas and national growth areas, where the case for change appears to have some substance.

#### There is too much emphasis on housing numbers

5. The planning system exists to achieve appropriate development and balanced communities. The consultation papers reveal an obsession with delivering large numbers of houses, almost to the exclusion of other considerations, such as where people might work, shop or enjoy leisure. Mix of development within “zones” (see below) is to be left largely to developers.
6. Any review of the planning system needs to consider other land uses besides housing, particularly in a period when economic development will be fundamental.

#### Assessing Local Housing Need

7. A new approach is outlined. This would take into account existing housing stock, household projections, affordability and the presence of development limitations such as Green Belt. The assessments would be binding. There appears to be no consideration of either local employment prospects, or the need to regenerate large parts of the country. Given the economic challenges of leaving the EU, recovering from the current recession and the rapid social changes that may happen as people respond to the Covid19 virus, this now seems even more of an oversight.
8. Assessments of housing need should be linked to forecasts of employment growth and policies to regenerate areas of economic stagnation. The latter should be prioritised.

#### Local Plans and Land Zoning

9. The consultations attempt to portray the planning system as a clapped out 1940s model. Ironically the main thrust of changes to Local Plans is to make them look more like a crude re-creation of the zoning plans of post war Britain. Local Plans would identify land in only three “zones” (a) growth areas (b) renewal areas and (c) protected areas. This seems too crude to achieve balanced communities, or to plan for specialist land uses such as quarrying, waste treatment, transport hubs or heavy industry.
10. There is not yet enough detail to see how this would affect a rural area like Mendip. It is not clear whether village land allocations, like the site on Newbury Lane Coleford, would be large enough to be a “growth area”. It is likely that the built up area of the village would be designated a “renewal area” where infill and redevelopment / conversions would normally be allowed, as is usually the case already. However, there is also reference to development of “small sites within *or on the edge of* villages” (italics added). Whilst “Protected areas” are described as including “areas of open countryside outside growth and renewal areas” it is not clear how the boundary of the “renewal area” would be drawn.

11.

Local Plans may be forced to draw much looser boundaries around settlements than we have now.

12. The three zone system appears to take no account of the need to plan for uses such as quarrying and others mentioned in para 10. More detail is needed to assess the effect of applying the three zones system to smaller settlements set in countryside that is open, but not protected by national designations such as green belt.

#### Speed of Local Plan Preparation and Automatic Planning Permissions in Growth Areas

13. The proposal is that new local plans would be completed within 30 months, with sanctions to ensure compliance. It is expected that local plan would cover 10 years (instead of 15 as now). This shorter timescale, the simplicity of plans, and the implied continuous assessment of housing need all indicate that they might be replaced frequently. Any new “growth area” would automatically have outline planning permission. It appears that the assessment of local plans would be a tick box process, with little scope for objection at a public hearing. This is unlikely to achieve the public confidence that the government predicts, because people will fear almost constant reviews, unchallengeable development proposals and uncertainty.

#### Design and Beauty

14. The intention is to improve design of new development within growth areas – to achieve “beautiful places”. This could be a benefit, but will be unwelcome to many house builders.
15. There are statements that imply that proposals which promote “beautiful” design may be able to override other policies. This could lead to a rash of “mansions” within protected areas such as National Parks and AONBs, or less protected open countryside. Clarification of intent is needed, but this could be a very divisive measure. It has been tried before.

#### Proposed changes that appear positive

16. These are :-
  - More emphasis on redevelopment of brownfield land and redundant buildings
  - A flat rate infrastructure levy to replace complex Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 negotiations
  - More emphasis on affordable housing, including first homes
  - More funding for infrastructure (but can we still afford it?)
  - More attention paid to flood risk
  - More emphasis on low emission housing
  - More work to accommodate rough sleepers

#### Recommendation

17. That this report be sent to NALC, copied to the constituency MP, as Coleford Parish Council’s comments.

After discussion it was agreed that this would be adjourned until the September Planning meeting to allow Councillors more time for consideration. The earliest response date is the 17<sup>th</sup> September.

Ag

## **9 Highways:**

Cllr Townsend had emailed a report to say that it had been good to see the potholes along Springers Hill and potholes and pooling at Stoke Bottom by the Fairy Cave junction had been marked up for repair. Drain clearance/ sucking along Charlton Rd has been witnessed.

### 9.1 Litter in Coleford / Charmborough Lane

Cllr Townsend has contacted Neighbourhood services to ask if they could request a road closure on behalf of the Parish Council to enable a litter pick to be completed on Charmborough Lane. He will notify the Council once a response has been received.

Ag

AT

### 9.2 Report of any new issues reported by Councillors

It was reported that there is a large dip in the road outside Mr Philips Farm on Dark Lane. The Clerk to investigate and report.

VW

The Clerk said that she had received a call from Jamie Witt of J W Waste who requested that signage be improved to stop HGV lorries accessing Charity Lane and Dark Lane. Clerk to meet with Mr Witt to establish his concerns. The Clerk said that she believed that Cllr Townsend had already spoken with Somerset Highways regarding implementing signage to prevent HGV access on this route. Clarification will be sought from Cllr Townsend as to the proposed location of the new signs and when this is expected to be installed.

VW  
VW  
VW

The Clerk was asked to raise concerns over lorries passing through the village at excessive speeds.

**10 Update on Mendip DC questionnaire survey on buses**

Cllr Conn had put together draft wording for our parish consultation on the Bus survey. The wording summarises the suggested response to the questionnaire (184 service, time of first and last buses etc.) plus the suggested response to the two questions where we can give ideas and opinions. The document has been posted on the website, parish notice boards and Facebook, which has been met with positive feedback. The public will be given until Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September to comment and the feedback can be compiled into a clear and final version for consideration at the Parish Council planning meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> September for submission before the MDC before the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> October.

Ag

**11 Accounts approved for payments**

The following payments had been submitted for payment:

V Watts - Clerk expenses	£60.30
Metro Rod – Drain investigation	£114.00
Alvian Ltd – Play area repairs & improvements	£6626.40
HMRC – National Insurance	£20.08
Context Planning Ltd – Consultation on Gladman Planning	£2070.00
Unity Printworks – Gladman planning board printing	£106.50
SLCC Virtual webinar conference £30.00 - Split 3 ways	£10.00
The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal – 2 x wreaths VJ & Remembrance	£36.50
Sunday	
Idverde Ltd – Cleaning of Goodeaves play area	£54.00

It was proposed by Cllr Conn and seconded by Cllr Banks that the payments should be made. Cheques will be signed by Cllr Ham, Cllr Conn and the Clerk

*Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions*

It was agreed that the Clerk would write a post on Facebook and in On the Map stating that the parish council had paid for a professional company to clean and sanitize a section of Goodeaves play area due to a child choosing to use it as a toilet which had resulted in the area being closed off whilst waiting for the contractor to come and complete the job. Parents will be asked to remind children that it is not acceptable behaviour. It is a shame that a minority are putting others at risk and potentially spoiling their time at the play area.

VW

**12 Play Areas including:**

Discuss Multi Use Games Area MUGA (also known as the Hard Courts)

The Clerk has started to seek quotes to replace the hard court fence but requires the measurements to ensure they are accurate. Cllr Turner confirmed that he would obtain this for the Clerk.

VW  
CT

Agenda item for October meeting

Ag

**13 Re-opening of the Changing rooms and need for Legionnaire's disease precautions**

The Clerk has had a conversation with John Hansford of Coleford Athletic Football Club and it is acknowledged that the Somerset FA are still recommending that players should arrive for matches in their kit and shower at home rather than using the changing rooms. It was agreed that this will continue and be reviewed as Government guidance changes.

The Clerk asked if the Parish Council could agree which contractor should do the deep clean, as agreed at the August meeting, so that this can be arranged as soon as restrictions are lifted. The Clerk had received several quotes for cleaning and fogging and after consideration it was agreed that the quote received from Riverside Cleaning Contractors would be accepted. They quoted a deep clean (10 hours) for £130 plus fogging at £100. The Clerk will thank the other companies for taking the time for quoting.

VW

*Vote: 7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions*

It was agreed that the responsibility for producing the risk assessment, managing the control of users, providing signage to guide users and the ongoing cleaning during and after use would lie with the Football club and will need to be agreed prior to use of the facilities. Clerk to prepare agreement ready for when restrictions are lifted.

VW

The Clerk will speak with Switchsafe to ensure that all measures to keep the water system safe at the changing rooms are being completed. The risk assessment is to be completed by Switchsafe next week.

VW

**14 Complaint regarding access at Beacon View and the broken bollards & gate. Discuss replacing bollards with new.**

After discussion it was agreed that the Clerk would ask the family who they had paid for the right of access across the land and when that payment had been made. Review at the October meeting.

VW  
Ag

**15 Update and discussion regarding drainage at Beacon View**

The Clerk had obtained a plan of the sewerage system and was currently trying to obtain the same for the surface water drains at Beacon View. The Clerk will also check the ownership of the land. This will be reviewed at the Planning meeting.

VW  
Ag

The Clerk will prepare a sign stating ‘Caution, slippery surface’ which will be laminated and displayed on a post near the path.

VW

**16 Land to the rear of Orchard Close**

After discussion it was agreed that the current tenancy agreements may need to be updated. Cllr Ham to seek legal advice. Agenda item for October.

PH  
Ag

**17 Discuss whether a water supply can be installed at the Goodeaves allotments**

Adjourn to allow the Clerk to obtain a quote from Bristol Water.

Ag  
VW

**18 Discuss requirements for new Allotments**

This will be carried forward to the October meeting. Cllr Ham to investigate further.

Ag  
PH

**19 Plans for future in person Council meetings**

Cllr Ham suggested that the September planning meeting takes place virtually using Zoom. Commencement of in person meetings will be discussed at that meeting.

Ag

**20 Correspondence**

- 20.1 SCC £1m Climate Emergency Community fund – Agenda item for Planning meeting Ag
- 20.2 Stronger Somerset invitation to attend Parish Forum event on 15/09/20 @ 12pm (Clerk to attend) or 21/09/20 @ 7pm VW
- 20.3 Invitation to Frome and Villages Forum on LGR on 15/09/20 @ 7pm. Cllr Ham and Pearce to attend. PH / CP
- 20.4 Creation of Multi user paths to facilitate walking or cycling to work on 29/09/20 @ 10am. Cllr Banks to attend. HB
- 20.5 Clerks and Councils Newsletter – to be circulated amongst all Councillors ALL

**21 Matters of urgency**

Clerk pay review to be discussed at the October meeting

Ag

**22 Date of Next Meetings:**

Wed 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 Planning Meeting  
Wed 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 Parish Council meeting