

Parish Council of Coleford

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Annual Parish Meeting held Wednesday 21st July 2021

1. Present

Cllr Henry Banks (Acting Chairman in the absence of Cllr Philip Ham)

There were 7 members of the public present

2. Apologies Absence

Christine Watts, Julia Neesam, Matthew Allen, Chris Pearce and Peter Crawford sent apologies.

3. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting 22nd May 2019

The minutes for the 2019 meeting were produced and had been on the website for review. There had been no meeting during 2020 due to the pandemic. They were agreed as an accurate record and duly signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's report

Cllr Ham gave the following report:

It is over two years since I reported to you on the workings of Coleford parish council. Last year's meeting cancelled and this year's slightly delayed. Covid 19 has had an effect on the council as it has on all of us. However, during the last two years as a council business has had to continue our we have done that with a for membership. Until the last month, meetings were virtual using zoom with some lasting 3 hours. The minutes are available on the parish council website. This was not ideal but at least we did our best, although many tried to speak when muted! Can you hear me came over the airways frequently?

With these recent times many people had come forward and helped the community. But the Parish Councillor in Coleford have done the village proud mostly behind the scenes. However, my biggest thanks must go to our clerk Vickie Watts. She has organised us, trained us to use zoom, kept all updates and reports regarding covid 19 circulated, closed down and opened play areas, and worked with so many other groups with advice and help. Thank you, Vickie.

Financially the council has maintained the correct level of reserves and hence kept the council tax to a minimum by producing a well-balanced budget to take us into next year. However, the Gladman applications and the appeal next months has cost £9760 to date. The result of Covid has also meant getting another contractor to cut the grass in the season -not an easy task but we are very grateful to Jamie for getting us back on track. Recently we got the Royal British Legion Coleford listed as an asset of community value and about a year ago the same for the Eagle Inn. We have dealt with several planning applications, some with success, more worrying is that lack of enforcement or understanding of it.

After the clerk salary and grass cutting, we spend money on litter bins, dog waste bins, this grit bins, new play equipment and repairs, and give yearly grants to village organisations. Our accounts are internally and externally audited and are on the website for anyone to take a look at. Recently we have had a spate of vandalism in the play areas which has been dealt with by the police and paid for by our insurers.

We have had a shortage of allotments and as a parish council we are bound to do our best to supply. We apply for climate change grants to try to set up some at the bottom of Highbury playing field – we were successful with the grant totalling £16,000 but due to the discontent of villagers we have withdrawn the planning application. If the site cannot be found over the next few months we will need to return the money. At the other end of Highbury playing field, we are looking at improvements to the hard-court area even to the extent of making it a 3G or a 4G facility – watch this space.

I would before I end just to thank the following for all they have done over the last 18 months. There are so many so if I've missed you, sorry that you or have made Coleford in very special community.

- Firstly, Wainwrights for the money they donated for the Foodbank and the hot food provision.
- To Tim and Dagmar Hewell for cooking hot meals for those in need, at a subsidized price.
- Amanda Young for first of all setting up Coleford angels and then the food bank taken on by Debbie Dando and the Somerset residents' team.
- Nicola Edwards for helping those who need help through being our village agent for Community Council for Somerset.
- Others include Mendip country practice, the Pharmacy, the Radstock Coop staff, Bishop Henderson school, citizens advice bureau up and the youth club.

Thank you everyone, the parish council is just the glue to the community.

6. Mendip District Council Report

District Cllr Townsend reported

COVID - The pandemic has inevitably had effects on Mendip's operation with redeployment of staff etc. and the operation of the SHAPE Mendip vaccination programme. Some £48M of Government funds has been distributed in over 10,000 payments of business grants. Mendip's offices will reopen on a limited basis from 2nd August but the majority of staff will still be working remotely.

UNITARY - The 4 District Councils organised a poll to promote their proposal for Stronger Somerset with separate unitaries for East and West Somerset as opposed to the County-led proposal for One Somerset. The papers pointed to a highly offensive spoof website abusing the Leader of Somerset County Council, and the excuse for its publication was considered to be a whitewash. We are pursuing the issue of compensation for harm done to the Council's reputation. The Secretary of State's decision on the Unitary way ahead is expected by 22nd July.

FINANCE - The 2020/21 Year End Outturn is expected to show a deficit of some £700k largely due to the reduced income and extra costs related to Covid, which have not been totally compensated by HMG. This will be covered by management of reserves, as will the expected shortfall for 21/22. Despite large borrowings at low interest rates in the year no new commercial investments have been made to help compensate for the shortfall.

PLANNING - Phosphates – because of a higher than permitted level of phosphates on sensitive areas of the Levels (Ramsar sites) all building in areas that drain into the Levels has been halted following a legal case in Europe. Mitigation plans are still awaited.

The Examining Inspector's Final Report on the Modified Local Plan Part 2 is now expected by the end of July, having been twice postponed. Mendip plan to formally adopt it at the end of September. The Gladman site for 63 houses on Anchor Rd is expected to be excluded. In August 2020 Mendip's Planning Board refused Gladman's original application by 7 votes to 6. Gladman resubmitted with marginal changes and this was rejected by the Board in March 2021 by 12 votes to 1. Meanwhile Gladman had submitted an Appeal against the original refusal and this will commence remotely on 18th August.

Resource in the planning area, particularly Enforcement, has been severely stretched with 7 vacancies. These are now being filled.

SCRUTINY - Cllr Ham resigned from his position as Chair on the basis that Scrutiny were repeatedly being faced with 'done deals' rather than being allowed to perform their proper function to examine and modify or even refuse proposals.

CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY - The Council's pathway to Carbon neutrality by 2030 has been published showing a realistic maximum achievement of a 30% reduction. The installation of Electric Vehicle charging points in Mendip's car parks does not reflect the emergency with none completed after two years, against the norm in the industry of 3 months. The deadline for applications for the Eco Emergency Fund has been extended to 30th September.

RBL - The Parish Council's bid to have the RBL accepted as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) was agreed by Mendip. This will give us a level of protection and buy time to prepare a bid if the central RBL organisation wishes to dispose of the lengths all the facility, as happened at Stratton. .

RECYCLING - SWP continue to have problems in Mendip, due largely to Covid and staff shortages.

7. Somerset County Council report

County Cllr Philip Ham reported that Somerset County council has been challenged like all councils since March 2020 from covid 2019. However, from the dark days of 2017 the financial state of the council has improved from about £10m in reserves to over £90m, however this is not even 25% of its annual spend. 70% of the annual spending goes on adult social services and children's services, leaving only 30 per cent to cover all the other functions from births and deaths, library, highways, heritage sites, mineral planning, Hinckley C just to mention a few.

Covid 19 has brought many challenges to Somerset County council especially in the early days with many care homes, care visits and PPE equipment. Many employees changing jobs to help with the crisis i.e. working in care homes, registration of deaths, working on supply chains. All with the offices were closed and working from home. As a council we have used Microsoft teams from virtual meetings including for Full Council meetings with around 140 attendees.

The pandemic, including organisation and delivery of financial help has shown why Somerset needs to be unitary council, something the leader David Fothergill had seen before the pandemic with the problem Northampton city council were having. David started the process of moving to unitary council early in Autumn 2019. We have moved on and the outcome will be known this month and change how we all use of council services in the future.

During lockdown our roads are in the top league for maintenance and many improvements have been made including junction 25A on the M5, North circular road in Taunton, major infrastructure changes around Bridgwater and junction 24 and junction 23 from Hinkley C '106' monies. The refurbishment of block A at county hall is now complete and onsite meetings are now being held.

Much of my Somerset County council time locally is taken up by the East Mendip quarry liaison meetings and subsequent planning applications, with many taking over a year to complete. I have also completed some highway improvement schemes especially the old Wells to Frome Road and after four years, still battling to sort the pavement on Anchor Road at the Crossways junction. This year I have also dealt with many child / school issues and adult social care problems all of which are treated totally confidentially. Many of the issues were covid related.

Being a district and county councillor is very interesting and rewarding but very busy especially this last 18 months.

Let's all hope for a brighter and there are future and that everyone can put together whatever the unitary decision.

8. Coleford Youth Club

Mark Wilcox attended the meeting and gave the following report:

We have seen a lot more young people over this quarter through our detached youth work alongside running activities at Highbury playing fields. There have been 46 attendances of young people. This quarter 12 new young people have also joined the youth club. The weather has been better (with the occasions of wet weather) which means we have generally seen more young people out. Also, the restrictions have started to lift which has meant we have seen more young people out mixing, now that they are able to. The group is developing well, with a mixture of boys and girls. The group interacts well & have also been supportive of new members who live in the village, who did not previously know anyone. The Youth club session has moved to a Thursday evening, instead of Tuesday's, which has seemed to work better for young people within the community and enabled us to reach more young people.

In the previous quarter, we were offering 1-1 walk & talk appointments, detached youth work and Zoom. This quarter we have been mostly doing detached youth work and running a range of activities in the park each week. We have also continued to be flexible and have been able to offer all of the above if young people want it to enable more young people to access our service.

Young people have been really enjoying the activities in the park which we would of not have been able to offer if the club was open. It has worked really well, and we have continued to see an increase in young people joining each week.

We have been doing detached youth work after the activity sessions, which has enabled us to meet new young people and reconnect with old members who we haven't seen since before COVID.

We have had some really positive and fantastic activity sessions, alongside detached youth work sessions over the last month, however one of the sessions in particular was really amazing. Not only did we support and work with 26 young people during the evening with many of them being new young people, but we were able to witness young people and the residents of the community come together through dance. A local Zumba teacher asked to use the courts (where we would usually do our activities) for her class to use, which the young people agreed to. Once the residents started dancing, a small group of young people went onto the courts to join in, respectfully. The young people went behind the class members to ensure they did not distract them. We asked if it was alright for them to join and the resident and instructors agreed it was okay to do so. More and more young people started to join in and at one time, there was over 20 young people, of all ages, all dancing and taking part in the class. The residents cheered the young people on and vice versa. Not only did the youth club members join in, but other young people that were in the park and field came to join. This was simply amazing to watch! Many of the young people spent the entire class time dancing away. At the end of the session, the residents and Zumba teacher gave a prize to one male and one female member and we all celebrated together! This session was completely unexpected but by far a really special session.

Young People's Involvement:

- Young people have had an input on the activity sessions and programme planning.
- Young people have been consulted in feedback regarding the sessions.
- Young people were consulted regarding changing the youth club session from a Tuesday to a Thursday evening.
- One of the older youth club members, has asked to become a peer leader when the club re-opens and a young volunteer to help run the activities within the session which we are now working towards with them.
- Young people are continuously consulted regarding the delivery of our sessions and service.

Some of the activities delivered throughout the quarter:

Activity sessions and Detached youth work:

- Information, advice and guidance
- Covid Advice and guidance
- Welfare check's
- Team building
- Healthy Relationships
- Anti-social behaviour and the community
- Emotional health/mental health
- School support
- Careers
- Peer Leaders
- Signposting
- Sports & Team Games
- Equality & Diversity

Highs:

- We have been able to further our reach in Coleford by not only providing detached youth work each week, but activities in the park for young people.
- We have seen an increase in youth participation over the last quarter and the group is developing really well.
- All the young people we now regularly see each week, are new members to Coleford youth club which is really positive that we have successfully reached new young people and are enabling them to access the service.
- We have been working on building a presence back in the community, and this has been developing well. We have had various residents, parents and young people speak to us to ask what we are providing and why. We have had really supportive responses from everyone.
- Positive feedback from parents of the youth club members, regarding the sessions and activities we provide.
- It has been really positive to see so many young people out in the community in their groups.

Lows:

Having to turn young people away from the youth club activities without consent forms. We have had several cases where parents have filled the form out on the day of the youth club session, however due to our processing system we ask that parents allow up to 7 days. Parents have still sent their child to the session which has then left some being disappointed. It's really important we have parental consent and young people's information, particularly due to COVID and keeping young people safe. However, there is now the flexibility (following national youth agency advice) to allow them to attend completing a registration form. Rs meals,

A couple of our youth club members were involved in some anti-social behaviour in Coleford. We spoke with the members involved and did some focus work around this. Young people recognised this was not acceptable and understand the Parish Council and community work hard to provide young people with opportunities. These young people engage well within the sessions and we will continue to monitor and support with this.

Priorities for next quarter:

- Promotion of the club & recruitment of new members
- To safely re-open the youth club when able too, and to provide young people with a varied programme to meet their needs.
- To support young people, offering information, advice and guidance and signposting them to other services accordingly.
- To support young people to re-connect with their community.
- To provide young people with the opportunity to have a say and feedback about our service delivery and how we can improve.

9. Public Forum

There were no points raised.

10. Tuesday Afternoon Club

Eileen Smith did not attend but provided the following report:

The committee have kept in touch with members by phone during lockdown. Some members do not have computers and so are unable to keep up with local news. Also, they do not have family locally and many have family abroad so it has been very lonely with no structure to the day and lack of social interaction. This applies especially to members living alone.

Most members found it very lonely during the winter. They are very grateful to the free meals, Dagmar's meals, meals from Wiltshire farm foods and donations from the Hub Foodbank. I am sure many are very independent and have not taken advantage of any help.

Members of the committee that were able to shop, bought items and the Christmas hampers were delivered to all members as well as a small gifts at Easter. These were greatly appreciated.

As to the future, plans are to have two tea and cake afternoons may be in August, with a view to seeing how many members will attend. If successful, I will contact speakers from 2020 with a view of getting a programme together for the autumn. We also hope to get one trek create for a meal at a garden centre visit before Christmas. Members had paid for the garden centre visits and fish and chip lunch before lockdown in 2020, so hopefully this can be fulfilled. If the

11. Huckydock carnival club report

Christine Watts did not attend but sent the following report:

Firstly, my apologies for not being able to attend this meeting due to a Hospital Appointment from which I have been advise to isolate. On behalf of the Carnival Club, I would like to thank the Parish Council for their grant of £200 to enable us to purchase L.E.D. light bulbs for our Cart Building Shed. These bulbs are an efficient source of energy and are economical to run saving us on our Energy Bills and are also environmentally friendly. Thank you.

Last year the Somerset Carnival Association cancelled all carnivals in our area and the same has happened this year. We have been unable to build an entry due to Covid restrictions and any fund raising has been kept to a minimum – hopefully next year we will see a full return to all our usual events like Marshalling at the Glastonbury Festival, our Quiz Nights and Jumble Sales at The Legion to name a few. We have all been affected by the Covid Pandemic and look forward to more normal times in the future.

12. @ The Hub

Cllr Ham said he would break his report into 3 sections, 1) The Past, 2) Now and 3) The future.

1 - The Past

The hub was doing OK before Covid 19 hit in March 2020. We knew of the issues regarding the future that business was okay with many settled groups using the hub. A promise of a 50-year lease and a new 10,000 pound plus heating system had just been installed. Everything closed and then we got into community mould and tried to do our best for the community by:

13. Getting the post office open
14. Providing hot meals at a reduced price or even free to those desperate in need
15. Providing space for the food bank which has now provided food for well over a year.

2- Now

The above is still going strong, other groups are welcomed back over the next few weeks and the parish council are already holding meetings.

We are trying to complete the lease with Somerset County council through our own solicitors. We have employed a cleaning contract company to clean for us and have many bookings for the autumn. We have also received Covid 19 funding to help get us through them last 18 months and to get open again for community use.

3-The Future

Depending on the covenants and agreements within the lease we have several projects in mind to make the hall more usable and sustainable in the future. For example:

- Double glazing of all windows and doors
- Opening at the back door to give an extra access point
- Solar panels on the roof
- Repairing the road wall
- Re tarmac the car park
- New storage and shelving
- New porch and front door

All of this is being done to provide community use and a home for the Coleford youth club. If anyone is interested in helping with the Hub please get in contact, as they say, many hands make light work.

16. Coleford Methodists

Mary Pearce attended and gave the following report from Coleford Class. Tuesday Afternoon Guild meet in the lounge of Douglas Yates Court. We are a Christian led group, but all are welcome. Usually numbering about eight to ten. Although we have not been able to meet this past year, we have tried to keep in touch with each other by phone. Also, we used surplus funds to give all members a small token of flowers or chocolates now and again just to help keep spirits up. Thanks must go to Stuart the Flowerman from Holcombe for giving us a generous discount each time, and to Martin Hall for delivering to fellow members. We eagerly look forward to meeting again in August We are planning a trip to Pilton Methodist Church, for

tea and cake. More possibilities are being explored, maybe a Traidcraft Afternoon in the autumn to gear up for Christmas. New members will receive a warm welcome. Even though we did not meet, we still managed to send a few shoe boxes to Samaritan's Purse ready for Christmas and helped with street collections in Frome for Christian Aid earlier this year. Sunday Services have also been suspended, but we hope to meet again once DYC reopens, and possibly use zoom. We miss our Sunday lunches, oh yes and the preachers. We are planning to hold at least one service a month with Holy Communion starting in September. Maybe two using zoom. We must thank Douglas Yates Court for being our hosts for all of our meetings. And thank Mike Evans for being our Lay Worker and wish him good health on his retirement. Our thoughts are with our Minister Rev. Graham Slingso during his illness.

17. Coleford Revival Group

Philip Horler confirmed that they group will be hosting a music day on 25th September – tickets £5 with under 14's going free. The Beatles Tribute band Cavern Nights will be playing. More information is available on the Coleford Revival Facebook page.

This year the group are giving pensioners a choice of either a hamper or a meal (provisional date of 04/12/21). Letters will be sent out this week so that they can decide which they are comfortable with.

Philip confirmed that although he would still be involved with the group he would be stepping down. He thanked the Parish Council for their continued support.

18. Bishop Henderson School

Tonie Scott gave the following report:

As we approach the end of another unusual academic year, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work of our school staff. I am always respect for their resilience and patients every day under the challenging and changing circumstances of this global pandemic. Our premises, office and classroom staff have worked diligently, kept optimistic and positive throughout and always put the well-being of the children first.

During the autumn term it was good to be back together again and we all became accustomed to new covid secure routines and having to work in separate bubbles. The next lockdown came in the spring term and the focus was on online learning for children and families at home. Schools opened again on 8th March and it was lovely to have all the children and staff back in school. We organized welcoming activities to help the children settle in and become accustomed to being together in the classroom again. During this summer term the focus is on catching up with lost learning and working to resume school improvement activities.

The government guidance for keeping schools Covid secure remains broadly unchanged at the time of writing this report. The system of controls and prevention measures that schools need to follow include minimizing contact, frequent hand washing and good ventilation. The full guidance can be found on the gov.uk website.

Due to the current restrictions, it has not been possible to invite parents on to the school site for our usual summer activities such as sports day. We had planned to hold a community celebration of the schools 50th birthday but this has been postponed until the autumn term when we hope that the regulations will be lifted. You are welcome to join us on Friday 17th September from 5pm at school.

We have celebrated the schools 50th birthday with some fun activities for the children, an obstacle course with a bouncy castle, birthday cake and an anniversary mug for each child to mark the occasion with some festivities in place for the children in school.

A quiet seating area by the pond in the playground is currently being constructed and there will be an official opening to mark the occasion with some festivities in place for the children in school.

Many thanks to the parish council for donating towards this. We will use the £500 that you have donated to buy some benches for the new seating area.

We are all looking forward to some rest in the summer holidays and returning in the autumn to school life with fewer restrictions. The level of stress and increased pressure on the staff and all of the school community over the last eighteen months should not be underestimated.

We are very pleased that we have not experienced a covid outbreak here.

So far, we have had to close the nursery twice. Once for two days and once for a week. Each time there is only one reported case. On reflection it has been a very successful year.

Number on roll for the coming academic year is 148 plus 30 in the nursery.

19. Coleford Woodcraft

Veryann Conn was unable to attend but provided the following report. We haven't met since before Covid-19 and I'm not quite sure what we will do in the future. On the one hand I think some of those involved before have moved on or away, on the other hand several more families have expressed an interest in being involved.

I'm about to check up how many would actually want to come to our sessions in the future, what help would be available for running sessions and what meeting time / day would suit most people. Assuming enough interest and support, I'm hoping that we can start meeting again after the summer holidays.

20. Holy Trinity Church

My report is fairly short as I only took on the role of church warden at the end of last year officially, Remembrance Sunday is the first thing I recorded, Clarissa did a zoom service which was very cleverly presented, and enjoyed by all. We had zoom services through lockdown which were well attended and Clarissa produced a newsletter each week this was emailed to those with computers and hand delivered to those without. We were back in church on the 6th December but with no hymns.

Clarissa was very busy over Xmas with services in church and zoom. Lockdown began again in January and we were back on zoom through February and to Easter where Clarissa did a zoom service for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Eve, back in church for Easter day. In church from the 11th April. On the 2nd July we held our first fundraiser which was a coffee morning, well attended and very much enjoyed by everyone. Finally, people could meet up. These coffee mornings will continue every 2 weeks. Coffee after church will now continue from 25th July all being well.

21. Coleford flower and craft show

Emily Brown reported that due to Covid 19 we have now cancelled two shows. We are planning to start planning next years show in September. We have started to collect up the cups won in 2019 to them engraved. Mary Pearce and Myra Perry are dealing with this.

As some of our members are getting older, we would be delighted to welcome any new members to our committee and especially if they have new ideas.

We look forward to a show in 2022.

22. Coleford Dungeons & Dragons

Peter Crawford submitted the following report as he was unable to attend. There are currently around a dozen regular members and we have been playing online since last spring. Everyone is looking forward to re-starting as normal tomorrow evening. Also, the general consensus is that the members would prefer to keep the Thursday evening slot.