

Parish Council of Coleford

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held Wednesday 15th January 2024

Present Cllr Ham (Chairman presiding), Allen, Bell, Banks, Evans, Moulding, Paterson, Pearce and Townsend.

In attendance 1 member of the public present
The Clerk, Vickie Watts taking the minutes

1. Public Forum

1.1 The Chair congratulated Neil and Nicky Halford who each received an MBE for services to Charitable Fundraising for Children with an Illness after co-founding the charity Time is Precious in 2011. Since 2017 they have raised over £1.3m using the funds to help provide facilities in a number of hospitals in the area.

Action: Clerk to write a letter to congratulate Neil and Nicky

1.2 A member of the public highlighted several pot holes next to the bridge in Vobster.

Action: Cllr Townsend to report

1.3 It had been noted that there had been a couple of accidents in the village recently and it was questioned whether they had been registered with the police. The police had been contacted at least on the incident outside the Temperance Hall but they said that as no one had been injured that they would not attend, despite the fact that the road was blocked.

1.4 VJ Day will take place on the 9th May 2025. Will Coleford be marking the occasion? Cllr Banks explained that the Theatre Group are planning to host a 'War themed' play.

1.5 Cllr Townsend reported that Bishop Henderson School are short of Governors. Anyone that is interested should get in touch with the school for more details.

1.6 Cllr Banks reported that a complaint had been received regarding the missing covers for the tennis net posts as the hole could cause an issue for small feet.

Action: Cllr Allen to measure the size of the covers.

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

Cllr Swords sent apologies which were accepted by the Chair.

3. Declaration of Interest and Dispensations granted since last meeting

As trustees of the Hub, Cllrs Ham, Townsend and Banks declared an interest on agenda item 14.6.

4. Approve the minutes from the meetings held on the 11th December 2024.

The Clerk had circulated the draft minutes prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Allen and seconded by Cllr Banks that the minutes accurately reflected the meeting and should be signed by the Chair.

Vote: 9 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstention

5. Actions arising from the minutes

All actions were completed or were dealt with as agenda items during the meeting.

6. Co-option of Councillors

There were no applicants to consider. There are 2 vacancies which the Clerk will promote.

Action: Clerk to advertise the vacancies.

7. Reports

7.1 Somerset Council

Cllr Ham reported that the new National Planning Policy Framework means that if refusing an application, the reasons must be strong and not just clear reasons. To refuse harm must greatly outweigh the benefits. The pressures on numbers along with our area having no phosphate limits, credits are very costly. The housing numbers have increased from 2669 per year to 3769 which is a 41% increase. The 5-year land supply was 3.55 years but is now only 2.2 years.

Boundary Changes – For the 2027 Somerset Elections there will be a reduction in the number of Councillors from 110 to 95, mainly one councilor per division. Coleford, Holcombe, Stratton on the Fosse and Kilmersdon would possibly be grouped together.

Budgets – The next 4 weeks are critical. There seems to be a small improvement in savings over the last 3 months figures but not enough to balance the budget. Will there be further cuts, intervention from Central Government, further redundancy and more sale of assets?

The Somerset report was circulated to all councilors and has been uploaded to the Parish Council website <https://www.colefordpc.org.uk/meetings.php>

7.2 PCSO

No report had been received.

7.3 Climate Action Group

Cllr Moulding confirmed that they had recently held a meeting on bio diversity and the AGM. The group is keen to help The Hub committee by seeking grants to help fund the installation of solar panels on the Hub.

8. Planning Applications

There were no planning applications.

9. Planning Updates

9.1 2024/1889/REM - Playing Field, Orchard Close, Coleford

The planning conditions have now been agreed. Pennys have stated that the next stage is to get a confirmed volume of import and also carry out a design statement and get this approved by the EHO, produce a Materials Management Plan and a site investigation report. They have already instructed the above to be carried out. Once actioned, Pennys will source soils to import. There are still some development works in Keyford, Frome which Pennys hope they can use as a source for material.

Action: Keep in touch with Pennys for updates.

9.2 Rainier application – since refusal there have been no further information on the planning website. They have 4.5 months left to appeal.

9.3 Gladman application – There has been nothing on the planning website since 4th December. The 13 weeks expires on the 24th January 2025 for the decision to be made.

10. Discuss future management of grass areas owned by Somerset and the grass contract
The Clerk will contact the contractor to thank him for the grass cutting quote, but will say no decision will be made until Somerset Council makes it clear that they are not going to continue with cutting the grass.

11. Update on installation of new barrier at Highbury playing field car park, new gate at the entrance to Beacon View and footpath repair at Mendip Vale. Agree any outstanding tasks
The repair to the footpath at Mendip Vale has been completed.

The gate at Beacon View has been installed although the bollards are not yet removed. This will be completed at a later date. The new gate needs to be locked and the key shared with those who require access. The old gate will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Action: Bollards to be removed. Clerk to lock the new gate and share keys

The barriers have been collected and are currently being stored at Cllr Ham's yard. The contractor hopes to install in approx. 6 weeks. It has been questioned whether the barriers need to be washed or even painted.

Action: Cllr Allen to inspect the barriers.

12. Highways including

12.1 Councillor update – Cllr Townsend said that there were 2 accidents in the village last week:

- On Highbury St outside the Temperance Hall, a vehicle struck the parked white car and the two vehicles ended up blocking the road. The police were informed but did not attend as no-one was injured.
- On the afternoon of Thursday 9th, there was an eye witness report of a collision near the Charmborough Lane/Charlton Road junction. Does anyone have any further information?
- The Highways Lighting Team confirmed that the faulty street lighting reported last month Anchor Rd/Brewery Lane will be repaired soon.

12.2 Consider AutoSpeedWatch and whether to purchase
It was agreed that this would be included in the budget for 2025/26.

12.3 Report of any new issues

- Charity Lane junction is still flooding.
- There is water running across the road from Kilmersdon Common towards Ham. This was extremely icy during the recent cold snap and a member of the public did have a fall. It has been reported to the Environmental agency but needs to be raised with Highways again for action.
- Mells Parish Council are looking to seek approval from Somerset Highways to install a 30mph limit through Vobster.
- The flooding at Barns Close, Leigh on Mendip continues to be very bad, which results in a lot of ice once the temperature drops.
- Street lights are out in the Goodeaves

Action: Cllr Townsend will investigate and report to Somerset Highways

13. Update on Coleford Menshed

Cllr Pearce confirmed that a public meeting at the Hub has been planned for 1st March. Cllr Townsend has already put a brief notice of this in the December parish magazine but it will be further advertised in the January and February editions as well as on the notice boards and on social media. It is intended that food would be supplied and an attraction such as owls or falcons will be invited.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Cllr Pearce to help plan the event

14. Finance

14.1 Agree bank reconciliation

Cllr Bell checked the bank reconciliation which had been prepared by the Clerk and found it to be in order.

14.2 Consider and agree whether to accept the quotes for emptying Coleford Parish owned bins

A quote of £1638 had been provided and would be included in the budget for the next financial year.

14.3 Consider and agree a grant towards the Commonwealth War Memorial

After discussion it was agreed that a plaque to the value of £75 would be purchased.

Action: Clerk to progress – cheque to be raised at the next meeting as an agenda item

14.4 Review and agree 3rd Quarter Budget Review 2024/25

All Councillors had considered the budget reports which had been shared prior to the meeting. The report showed that:

The total predicted forecast for income for the year end is £70,970.72

The total predicted forecast for payments for the year end is £65,263.32

This predicts an underspend of £4,096.80

The budget was agreed and signed by the Chair.

Vote: 9 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

14.5 Consider and agree Budget for 2025/26

Cllrs Ham, Townsend and Banks declared an interest in the discussion around the Hub receiving a grant and did not participate in the discussion.

All Councillors had considered the draft budget for 2025/26 which had been shared prior to the meeting. Time was spent considering each line and there was a discussion around whether to include a grant to help support the Hub who regularly provide free access for village groups who provide support / services to the community. It was proposed by Cllr Moulding and seconded by Cllr Allen that a grant of £2K should be included.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 3 Abstention

The draft budget for 2025/26 showed a predicted income of £4,027.00 and predicted payments of £77,786.31. It was proposed by Cllr Patterson and seconded by Cllr Allen that the budget should be agreed.

Vote: 9 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

14.6 Consider and agree Precept for 2025/26

It was proposed by Cllr Bell and seconded by Cllr Moulding that the precept should be set at £83,780. This would support the agreed budget and go some way to increasing the reserves which have become depleted in recent years. This would result in a charge of £2.13 per week for a Band D household, which would be an increase of 49p per week when compared to last year.

It was proposed by Cllr Bell and seconded by Cllr Moulding that the precept should be set at £83,780

Vote: 9 For, 0 Against, 3 Abstention

Action: Clerk to submit the Precept

- 14.7 Accounts approved for payments:
The following invoices were presented for payment:

HMRC – National Insurance & Tax due (Inc back pay)	£119.86
Read Agriservices – Gate for Beacon View	£250.00

It was proposed by Cllr Banks and seconded by Cllr Allen that the payments should be made. The cheques were signed by Cllr Ham, Townsend & Banks.

Vote: 9 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstention

15. Meetings to attend / attended

27/01/25 at 7pm @ Shape Mendip. Shepton LCN. Cllr Ham to attend
25/03/25 @ 10am Teams meeting for Better Buses for Somerset. Cllr Moulding to attend

16. Correspondence

11/01/24 – Stoke St Michael Parish Council are inviting local parish council representatives to attend a free workshop on creating an emergency plan. The date is yet to be confirmed.

Action: Clerk to respond to say that Cllr Moulding would like to attend.

05/01/25 – Request to use the playing field or hardcourts for additional parking for a wedding on 12th July 2025 and to know what the fee might be.

Action: Cllr Banks to liaise with the person seeking permission

17. Date of Next Meetings:

22nd January 2025 Planning meeting
12th February 2025 Parish Council meeting

The meeting ended at 21.50hrs