

COLTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 7th FEBRUARY 2024
AT 7:00 PM AT COLTON VILLAGE HALL

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Maximum of 20 mins at the beginning of the meeting to hear public questions and comments)

Rachel Bayliss, Churchwarden, attended to respond to comments recorded in recent PC minutes regarding, in particular, the maintenance of Pedley's Croft and the PC's decision not to increase its contribution to mowing costs. Rachel explained that the Church does not have external sources of income and exists primarily on donations from its congregation. Whilst it did receive a generous legacy some years ago that is ring-fenced for restoration works to the building. The church feels that it makes a valuable contribution to parish life including allowing use of Pedley's Croft for village events and ceremonies and thus is deserving of contributions to maintenance costs. The church wished to ensure there is good communication with the PC as there had always been a good working relationship in the past.

These comments were noted and NT asked the church to let the PC know if there was anything they would like built into the PC's budget for 2025/26 (next year's budget already having been set).

2 parishioners were attending a PC meeting for the first time as they were particularly interested in the speeding issues being discussed. Safety pulling out near Bellamour Corner was a particular concern of theirs. One of the parishioners had written to SCC about this, the speed of vehicles near the turning into the village and the number of accidents and would like to see a 40mph speed limit there.

RC responded that evidence is needed and that reducing the speed limit is a long and complicated process, with priority given to areas where population and traffic are high. Parishioner was asked to send details of his correspondence so that **RC** could follow up with Highways. SCC can sometimes locate a speed device for 2 weeks to provide evidence. A 'Concealed entrance' sign might also be an option.

(No member of the public may address the meeting hereafter)

BUSINESS AGENDA

1. To note attendance and receive apologies for absence

In attendance were Councillors Noel Talbot (NT), who chaired the meeting, Garren Edwards (GE), Nigel Parry (NP) and Lynne Richardson (LR), County Councillor Richard Cox (RC) and Clerk Alison James. Apologies were received from District Councillor Keith Vernon. 5 members of the public attended for either public participation or the whole meeting.

2. To receive declarations of interest - None

3. To approve minutes of the meeting held on 3rd January – Approved and signed.

4. Chairman's Announcements - None

5. Payments

a) To approve the following payments:

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| i) | 1989 | SLCC Enterprises Ltd – Training webinar for Clerk on Cemetery Safety & Memorialisation, 19 Jan (30.00) plus VAT (6.00) | £36.00 |
| ii) | 1990 | TGM – Gritting of roads not covered by SCC in December – Main Colton streets, 3 visits (270.00), Brook bridge, 3 visits (45.00); Stockwell Heath, 2 visits (30.00); Stretch of road at Stockwell Heath, 1 visit (120.00) | |

		plus VAT (93.00)	£558.00
iii)	1991	Alison James – Clerk’s salary, February (356.93) Home working expenses, 5 weeks, 6 Jan – 9 Feb (20.00); Reimbursement for bank payment to magazine delivery girl on 29 Jan for February (20.00);	£396.93
iv)	1992	Barn Dance Caller – Potential deposit for June event t.b.c. (discussed later at agenda item 9)	

(Total of new payments for approval is £990.93 plus 1 payment t.b.c.)
Cheques 1989 to 1991 were approved.

6. HS2

To consider invitation to Annual Phase 2a Highways Subgroup meeting on 26 February (*t.b.c.*) & information about removal of majority of safeguarding directions for Phase 2a – Clerk was unclear whether the Highways Subgroup meeting had now been cancelled but no-one had been interested or available to attend anyway. RC emphasised the distinction between safeguarding for Phase 2a and the continuing Phase 1 works around Armitage. There is a lot of uncertainty and issues regarding the halting of Phase 2a.

7. Planning Matters

- a) To note any applications received and make observations to the Planning Authority:
 - i) 24/00046/COU – Colton Lodge, Bellamour Way, Colton – Change of use of coach house and barn to 1 dwelling, erection of single storey rear extension, parking and external works – PC response to LDC had been made, with no objections or comments raised.
- b) To report on any recent decisions of the Planning Authority:
 - i) 23/01096/COUM – Border Collie Trust GB, Narrow Lane, Colton – Change of use of land from agriculture to a Dog Exercise Area with associated infrastructure and removal of one tree – Approved

8. Highways, Footpaths and Open Spaces

- a) To report on new issues or progress and agree any action required:
 - i) Flooding and highways maintenance including Petition re Flooding & Maintaining Road Access and particular floods at Bellamour Lane Bridge and Hollow Lane – PC’s petition had been completed and was given to **RC** to hand in and speak about at SCC meeting later that week. Disappointingly, not as many signatures had been obtained as had been hoped, especially given the strength of feeling at the time when the village was cut off. RC had already raised the issue with his Conservative group members, acknowledging that much work was being done on potholes but emphasising that a strategy was needed to avoid certain communities e.g. Colton and Hamstall Ridware, becoming isolated. SCC’s strategy for gully maintenance needs to be reviewed, given the likelihood of more bad weather events. The Cabinet member for Highways had acknowledged the points made as very valid. NT pointed out that an ambulance was unable to get into the village to help a parishioner after a fall, though fortunately locals were able to cope. RC had ensured that the planned closure of Colton Rd in December was deferred and commended the useful and pragmatic comments from Andy Chappell concerning the flooding under Bellamour Lane bridge, which he had forwarded to Highways.

- ii) State of Newlands Lane – Some patching work had been done but repairs are still needed and RC said work is ongoing. It is a long road with issues all the way along.
- iii) Parking issues in the village – Advice had informally been obtained from a police traffic officer, who said that notices should not be put on vehicles unless warning notices are put on lamp posts first. It was agreed that local PCSO should be invited to a PC meeting to discuss, as it is a community safety issue (**Clerk**).
- iv) State of Narrow Lane (at end of Heathway) – A local contractor had been asked to quote for clearing the mud from the middle of the road but was unwilling, as concerned how SCC might react and it is their responsibility to maintain. The 'Unsuitable for motor vehicles' sign suggests they do not want it cleared for regular use. **RC** offered to ask Highways about it and whether they would have any objection to PC clearing it for pedestrians only.
- v) Issue of speeding in the village raised by parishioners, suggested set up of Community Speed Watch and other potential measures to reduce speeding – NP had been looking into technology to monitor speeds and vehicle numbers, particularly a radar sensor on the top of a lamppost. He had spoken to a contact at SCC and was awaiting a price from Eon. A more expensive option would be a speed indicator device and RC said he might be able to provide some funding for a post for that, once a new round of funding becomes available in April. Highways has to approve locations and written permission is also needed from nearby residents. There was general agreement that a greater police presence is needed on the roads.
- vi) Condition of benches near the phone box and the Closed Burial Ground – Quote for refurbishment works – Quote had been received to cover works to the 2 benches and a noticeboard but it was thought that someone had, in the meantime, done some repairs and painting of the bench by the Closed BG. **Clerk** to check and instruct handyman to undertake any remaining works per his quote.
- vii) Improving the appearance of the parish and jobs for parish handyperson – Possible litter picking event – **Clerk** to put on March agenda with a view to an event in April when weather should be better.
- viii) Parking arrangements in the vicinity of the school at start and finish times – Reply from headteacher to PC letter said school would take action to try to discourage parents from parking too near to the brook bridge, with an extension to yellow lines also suggested. Parking over by the church did raise the issue of safety crossing the road. PC agreed to wait a bit longer to see if there was any improvement in light of school's reply.

9. To discuss progress on arrangements for parish events in June 2024

Feedback from further informal meeting and possible barn dance – Various events now in planning for 22nd/23rd June. PC agreed to proceed with the barn dance/ceilidh on the Saturday evening with possible small charge for adult tickets. PC has already committed some funds but those will need to cover insurance for the beacon lighting. **RC** kindly offered £400 from his county councillor's community funding from April, as he had not given anything to Colton for a long time. Cheque 1992 was approved in the sum of £125 for the deposit for barn dance caller (**Clerk** to book). Next organisers' meeting would consider if hire and manning of a bouncy castle was viable and **NT** to contact a face painter. **Clerk** to email to confirm attendance of fire engine, discussed by NT with Rugeley fire station chief.

10. To discuss ideas to raise profile of PC on social media and with younger generation

Draft engagement plan circulated by Noel Talbot – Plan had been drafted by NT's daughter and had many useful ideas which would benefit from more detailed discussion. PC to look at arranging a separate meeting (**NT**).

11. Correspondence

To note items of correspondence received and agree any actions required:

- a) Copies of correspondence between landowner and SCC about yew hedge on Bellamour Way (Emails, circulated to cllrs)- **Clerk** to send RC a copy of correspondence.
- b) Parishioner – Email of 14/1 concerning state of Village Hall field after caravan club visit and safety for children playing (Email, circulated to cllrs and passed to VHMC) – Contractor had harrowed the field and will roll it once it has dried out. Normally this is done every year after caravan club visit but weather conditions have prevented it till now.
- c) VHMC – Article for parish magazine concerning VH bookings, finance and maintaining access to play area during bookings (Emails)
- d) Scribe – Link to 'Transform your Council's email campaigns with Mailchimp' training webinar on YouTube and copy of slides (Email) – **Clerk** to watch video and advise if looks useful. Links with engagement strategy.
- e) SPCA and Staffs Community Foundation – Information about Best Kept Village and Community Competition 2024 (Email, circulated to cllrs) – RC advised that competition is being overhauled with more emphasis on community value rather than tidiness. It could be a good way to get villagers and village organisations working together but not just for PC to do, as community involvement is essential.
- f) Hedgehogs R Us – Hedgehog Highways project and ideas for working with school (Email, circulated to cllrs) – A nice idea but probably villagers are already wildlife-aware.
- g) HS2 – HS2 (National) Project Update, January 2024 (Email) – RC is trying to push HS2 to make the community funds left over from Phase 1 available to those blighted by Phase 2a, where that community funding has been withdrawn. **LR** offered to contact VHMC treasurer to see if they could try to get funding for solar panels for Village Hall.
- h) SPCA – Weekly bulletins including latest training courses and new NALC model employment contract (Emails, mainly circulated to cllrs)

12. Committees

To note any update from Burial Ground Committee – **Clerk** has encountered further hurdles with mandate updates but still pursuing. Quote for support for fallen wisteria in Open BG to be circulated to BGC members (**Clerk**).

13. Finance and audit

- a) To hear report from Clerk on progress with interim audit by internal auditor – Interim audit now completed satisfactorily, with date of 20th May agreed for year end audit.
- b) To confirm submission of 2024/25 precept request to LDC – Request submitted on time and acknowledged by LDC.
- c) To hear update on grazing licence – Clerk had spoken again to lady at Hinson Parry, who agreed to look at file records as previous contact had now

left the firm. Licensee had confirmed he would be happy with a 2 year licence and accepted the new fee set for 2024/25.

- d) To hear any update on banking arrangements – Nothing to report.
- e) To review the PC's risk assessment – Annual review and adoption of a risk assessment is an audit requirement. Clerk had therefore updated the February 2023 document, taking account of actions completed and Internal Auditor's recent comments about risk of using personal email addresses for council business. PC agreed to adopt the version circulated.

14. Parish Council matters

- a) To discuss how to fill councillor vacancies – To be considered as part of the engagement strategy.
- b) To consider whether another tree inspection report should be commissioned in 2024 – Inspections have normally been undertaken every 2 years and the last one was in 2022. PC agreed to seek another inspection and to contact the independent inspectors used last time (**Clerk**).

15. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 6th March at 7.00pm

RC gave his apologies for the next meeting and NP his apologies for March, April and May meetings.

Meeting closed at 9.05pm