

COLTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 5TH MARCH 2025

AT 7.30 PM APPROXIMATELY (TO FOLLOW BURIAL GROUND COMMITTEE MEETING STARTING AT 7 PM) AT COLTON VILLAGE HALL

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

LDC councillor Keith Vernon (KV) had been contacted by a parishioner seeking assistance, as phone numbers in the parish magazine that had been tried apparently did not work. Chair rang parishioner to pass on some information and phone numbers that would hopefully help.

Clerk to notify magazine editor of potentially out of date numbers displayed in magazine.

KV also said that LDC's CEO had asked ward councillors to bring any ward issues to his attention. If anyone is aware of anything for Colton they should contact KV.

BUSINESS AGENDA

1. To note attendance and receive apologies for absence

In attendance were Councillors Noel Talbot (NT), Garren Edwards (GE), Richard Monbiot (RM) and Nigel Parry (NP), District Councillor Keith Vernon (KV), County Councillor Richard Cox (RC) and Clerk Alison James. 1 member of the public observed. NT had been proposed and seconded to chair the meeting.

2. To receive declarations of interest – None declared

3. To approve minutes of meeting held on 5th February – Minutes were approved and signed by NT as Chair.

4. Chairman's Announcements - None

5. Payments

- a) To confirm details of payment agreed at last meeting:
 - i) 2054 TGM – Gritting of roads on 3 occasions in January, as arranged by councillors (285.00) plus VAT (57.00) £342.00
- b) To approve the following payments (either as cheques from existing NatWest account or as electronic payments from new Lloyds account, depending on progress):
 - i) 2055 or EP1 with payment date of 14 March:
J Flint – Clear pavement & overgrowth etc on part of right hand side of High St £250.00
 - ii) 2056 or EP2 with payment date of 14 March:
Colton Village Hall – Room hire, Jan-March £45.00
 - iii) 2057 or EP3 with payment date of 28 March:
Alison James – Clerk's salary, March (370.96); Home working expenses, 4 weeks, 8 Feb – 7 Mar (20.00); Reimbursement for bank payment to magazine delivery girl on 27 Feb for March issue (20.00) £410.96
 - iv) 2058 or EP4 with payment date of 31 March:
HMRC – Payroll taxes, Q4 Jan-Mar £305.72

The payments listed were approved. **Clerk** would try to set them up as bank transfers from the new Lloyds bank account and then notify **NT**, **GE** and **NP**, so 2 of them could authorise online.

6. Planning Matters

- a) To note any applications received and make observations to the Planning Authority:
 - i) 25/00174/FUH – School Cottage, Bellamour Way, Colton – Single and two storey side and rear extensions
Standing orders revoked to enable parishioner to bring to councillors' attention some further details of the application, which were not apparent from LDC's description and only from reading the application documents in detail. Applicant had sought pre-application advice from LDC and been advised that they needed to provide parking spaces. They therefore proposed removing part of the front wall and putting in a gate, which LDC appeared to have considered acceptable. However, parishioner pointed out that there is a telegraph pole near there which would make it difficult for the gate to swing open as required. A previous application at the property in 2019 had proposed lowering the front wall and Highways were not happy with the visibility splay. Councillors had no objection to the extension in principle but agreed that there could be issues with visibility due to the parking situation and road width there. RM proposed that PC recommend refusal due to safety concerns and NT seconded, with 2 other councillors abstaining. **Clerk** was therefore instructed to submit PC recommendation for refusal to LDC. **KV** said he would speak to the planning officer and ask for it to be called in to be considered by LDC's Planning Committee. Standing orders were then reinstated.

A further planning application (25/00211/LBC) had just been notified for various internal and external repairs at Lower Newlands Farm, which is a listed building. No comments were made so **Clerk** to submit nil response to LDC.

- b) To report on any recent decisions of the Planning Authority: None notified by time of issue of agenda or since
- c) To hear any update on planning application for Moreton Brook Solar Farm off Lea Lane in Blithfield parish (East Staffs Borough Council ref. P/2024/00696) - Clerk had checked ESBC website. No decision had yet been made but no consultation responses were showing. Clerk had been in touch with Blithfield PC's Clerk who said that the application would be going to March planning meeting but it was not clear whether Blithfield PC had objected or not.

7. Highways, Footpaths and Open Spaces

- a) To report on new issues or progress and agree any action required:
 - i) Flooding and highways maintenance – SCC investigations on Hollow Lane flooding and flooding by brook bridge; Drain near bridge on Bellamour Way; Pothole on Bellamour Way opposite school; Roundabout at bottom of High St; Blocked drain near Bellamour Corner - RC said that SCC had commissioned a report in response to the flooding concerns, recently sending staff to assess and put cameras down gullies and they also sent road sweepers. Emails had been sent to the PC explaining this and also asking for information about the owners of land on either side of Hollow Lane near the blocked gully. A parishioner had raised concerns following RC's previous comment that SCC thought dredging the brook might help prevent flooding there and suggesting contacting the Environment Agency. Councillors agreed

that the gullies are the main issue and that flooding clears relatively quickly now after heavy rain. The previous Environment Agency modelling did not generate any results so the best way to mitigate was thought to be proper maintenance of the gullies.

The blocked gully at Bellamour Corner is now a major concern, as drivers unfamiliar with the road may hit the flood water at too high a speed.

- ii) Items raised by parishioner discussed under Chairman's Announcements at January meeting – State of Newlands Lane and potential clearing of ditches; Potholes on Moor Lane; Request to HS2 to maintain its hedges - Clerk had sent request for hedge maintenance to HS2 but not yet had any response. **RC** said same parishioner had also contacted him about that so he would take up. The suggested clearing of ditches on Newlands Lane looked to be a much bigger job than the 2 hours labour the PC had agreed to pay for and there was also an issue about how to dispose of the debris.
- iii) Improving the appearance of the parish and any progress with work by a parish handyperson – Handyman had been engaged to clear the overgrowth and pavement part way up High St and had done a good job.
- iv) Litter picking – A date for a community litter pick would be agreed at the next meeting when the weather should be better.
- v) Issue of speeding in the village raised by parishioners – Any progress with purchase/installation of electronic monitoring device or potential SCC speed survey – NP had spoken to his SCC contacts, who had approved the installation of an alternative speed monitoring device and he was now awaiting a quote from a supplier.
- vi) Rights of way maintenance including Hollow Lane stiles – **Clerk** to ask a parishioner if they know of any issues on paths around the village. It was thought that the Hollow Lane stile had been repaired.
- vii) Items raised by parishioner under Public Participation at February meeting - Overgrown hedge on Bellamour Way; Request for dropped kerbs by brook bridge – RC reported that he had asked the Highways inspector to revisit the hedge on Bellamour Way as after his last visit the inspector had said it was not causing any obstruction. PC had understood that Highways would be monitoring and felt Highways should be pursuing. Re parishioner's request for a dropped kerb, RC said he considered it too expensive a job and not of sufficient priority to pursue.

8. To discuss plans for Colton Summer Festival on 28 June 2025

There had been a good turnout for the recent planning meeting including representatives from the school PTA, who had agreed to seek volunteers to man the bouncy castle. A programme of activities was lined up consisting of duck race, tug of war, cherished cars, choir and flower displays in the church and then stalls at the village hall, bouncy castle, tea and cakes from WI and potentially a pop up bar for the afternoon and also the evening when there would be a band playing. RC said he could not offer funding until policy was clearer after the County Council elections in May. But he suggested it may be worth applying to the We Love Lichfield Fund, as they are keen to support community cohesion.

9. Correspondence

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

- a) Parishioner – Email of 22/2 asking if PC has any plans to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day on 8th May (Email, circulated to cllrs) – Whilst a nice

idea, PC decided it could not organise anything further given the work involved in organising the Festival in June.

- b) SPCA – Various bulletins including plans and timescale for local government reorganisation in Staffordshire and free rural-themed seminar on 5th March (Emails, mainly circulated to cllrs)
- c) LDC – Agenda and previous minutes for Parish Network meeting on 27th February (Email, circulated to cllrs)
- d) LDC – Information about a community led research project on community safety and invitation for volunteers to get involved (Email, circulated to cllrs and taken up with LDC)
- e) Keep Britain Tidy – The Great British Spring Clean between 21 March and 6 April (Email, circulated to cllrs)
- f) TGM – Insurance certificates for 2025 season (Email)
- g) Blithfield PC – Enquiry about contractors used to install village gateway signs as they plan to install some on B5013 Admaston Rd (Email; Clerk replied)
- h) Staffs Community Foundation – Best Kept Village competition 2025 update, with entries opening 1st March (Email)
- i) LDC – Invitation to councillors from LDC Chair to Civic Service on Sunday 23rd March (Email, circulated to cllrs)

10. Committees

To hear update from the prior Burial Ground Committee meeting – BGC had agreed to request £1,000 from PC in April from its 2025/26 budget to cover ongoing maintenance, which was approved by PC (**Clerk** to arrange payment in April).

11. Finance and audit

- a) To receive report of receipts and payments compared to budget for 2024/25 year to date – Clerk had circulated a report including transactions to end February and had estimated that there would be a small underspend at year end, whereas the budget had been set to require about £5,000 to be taken from reserves. A bank reconciliation and corresponding bank statements had also been circulated and these were signed off by the Chair.
- b) To agree any earmarking of funds at end of 2024/25 financial year – Clerk had circulated a table suggesting earmarking that could be agreed for year end, along the lines of previous years. It was agreed that any unspent budget for the play area (likely to be about £535) should be put into the earmarked reserve for future play area replacement. The earmarked reserve containing survey access money from HS2 should again be used to cover the cost of grass cutting at Stockwell Heath. The small budget underspend on the parish magazine (about £35) should be added to that earmarked reserve. **Clerk** to update spreadsheet accordingly as part of year end accounts.
- c) To hear progress on any action required after 2024/25 interim audit – Any further discussion on Clerk's employment contract; Data protection notice – **Clerk** to circulate insurance schedule again. An updated copy of Clerk's notes in case of absence were given to NT for retention on behalf of PC. **Clerk** had now obtained various data protection notices from other PCs but had also found a previous version approved by Colton PC in 2018 and would produce an updated version for consideration.

- d) To hear progress on actions in council's approved risk assessment document including update of version on PC website and proposed review at April, July, October 2025 and February 2026 meetings (if required) – Approved document had been uploaded to website and **Clerk** would be pursuing the various actions over coming months and reporting back at regular intervals. A BGC member had offered to start scanning burial ground records.
- e) To hear update on switch of banking to Lloyds and agree next steps e.g. Potential savings accounts for reserves; Closure of NatWest account – It had been agreed at agenda item 5 to make March payments from this account, as 3 councillors had been able to successfully log in. **Clerk** to notify LDC of the new account details for the precept payment in mid-April. This would then provide sufficient ongoing funds and remove the urgency to transfer the remaining funds from NatWest. **Clerk** to enquire how to add RM as a signatory and investigate potential Lloyds savings accounts.
- f) To hear update on review of financial regulations against NALC model template – **Clerk** had not had time to pursue this yet.

12.Parish Council matters

- a) To discuss progress with improved signage for Village Hall, raised by Cllr R Monbiot on behalf of VHMC – **RC** said that he had no funds for the new sign at the main road until the situation after the May elections is known. However, he would provide contact details to **RM** for the Village Hall to potentially apply for the sign themselves.
- b) To instigate arrangements for Parish Assembly to be held before PC meeting on Wednesday 2nd April including circulating Annual Report – **Councillors** and **Clerk** to produce a notice for the magazine, noticeboards and residents' Facebook site highlighting what the PC has achieved this year, what it is currently working on and asking for suggestions for further initiatives. Parishioners would be invited to come along and offer their thoughts between 7 and 7.30pm on Wednesday 2nd April, before next PC meeting.

13.Date of next meeting – Wednesday 2nd April at 7.30pm (to follow Parish Assembly meeting starting at 7pm)

NP offered his apologies for the April and May meetings. As another councillor would also be unavailable for the planned May meeting date, a new date would need to be agreed to ensure a quorum (**Clerk**).