

## **COLTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> APRIL 2025 AT COLTON VILLAGE HALL**

### **PARISH ASSEMBLY MEETING/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FROM 7PM UNTIL 7.30PM**

The format of the Assembly had been changed for this year, to this half hour session, with feedback sought from parishioners via an article in the parish magazine, an email sent to those on the PC circulation list and a post on the Colton Residents Facebook page. These sought comments on the work that the PC had done during the preceding year and the issues it planned to pursue in the year. 4 emails had been received and various posts put on the Facebook group. 5 parishioners attended the session and were invited to make any further comments. The following topics were covered:

Speeding concerns on Bellamour Way and B5013 towards Admaston – Concerns about Bellamour Way had been raised some months ago and PC had been trying to get an electronic device fitted on a lamppost to collect data about speeds, or possibly have a speed survey done by SCC, to establish if there is a problem. **NP** was trying to get a quote for a simpler device to be fitted. Regarding the road to Admaston, it was suggested that certain vehicles attempt the bends at inappropriate speeds and cut across lanes and the speed limit should be reduced. PC agreed to ask Richard Cox if SCC could carry out a speed analysis there (**Clerk**).

Previous request for a dropped kerb on either side of the brook bridge – Richard Cox had said that this would not happen as not of sufficient priority and the cost was prohibitive.

Overgrown yew hedge on Bellamour Way – This issue had been raised several times in recent years. It is not possible to walk safely along the pavement there as it is obstructed. In particular, where it slopes near Bellamour Corner, there is a risk of falling into the road and this had happened to 1 parishioner last year. PC agreed that it is an issue. A Highways inspector had previously been in correspondence with the landowner so PC had asked them to pursue again. More recently the inspector had attended and said that he didn't consider it an obstruction. So Richard Cox had taken this up again on PC's behalf and was asking the inspector to review. Another overgrown hedge/ivy on Bellamour Way near Reading Room Drive was also mentioned.

PC's removal of fallen trees near brook bridge – 2 parishioners had commented that PC should not have paid for removal, as the trees were the responsibility of the landowner. PC had arranged speedy removal as they were creating a safety issue by reducing visibility but agreed that it set a precedent and would take the comments on board.

Concern about increase in precept for 2025/26 – Recent council tax bills had raised alarm as PC's component had increased by 26%. PC explained that the increase was to continue to cover certain additional expenses such as gritting and drain clearance, as SCC would not undertake to grit the additional areas and, despite being responsible for drains, did not clear regularly enough. Also, the PC's part of council tax had decreased in several previous years as PC was deliberately reducing its reserves. However, this could not continue indefinitely and the increase, although large in percentage terms, amounted to less than £1 per month for a band D property. PC explained that councils are required to keep between 3 and 12 months of normal expenditure in reserves, with a small council like Colton expected to be nearer 12 months. In addition, Colton had certain earmarked reserves for specific purposes such as a replacement play area or an election or if a locum clerk was required at short notice.

Flooding – Following pressure applied on SCC and with Richard Cox pressurising for action on our behalf, a parishioner reported that a Highways team had been in the village to carry out a survey on Bellamour Way. They had put a camera down into the culvert which runs under the road near the school, where there was flooding recently and water coming up through holes in the road. Unfortunately their equipment was unsuitable to get a full view of the culvert but they think that the culvert is probably damaged and would be reporting that back to Highways. There is concern that the road could one day collapse. PC agreed to raise its concerns and to press for sight of the report and for further action by Highways (**Clerk** to raise with Richard Cox).

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

## **BUSINESS AGENDA FROM 7.30PM**

### 1. To note attendance and receive apologies for absence

In attendance were Councillors Noel Talbot (NT), who was proposed and seconded to be Chair for this meeting, Garren Edwards (GE) and Richard Monbiot (RM), District Councillor Keith Vernon (KV) and Clerk Alison James. Apologies received from Councillor Nigel Parry (NP) and County Councillor Richard Cox, who had to attend an LDC meeting. 5 members of the public observed.

### 2. To receive declarations of interest - None

### 3. To approve minutes of meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March – Approved and signed by NT.

### 4. Chairman's Announcements - None

### 5. Payments

- a) To confirm details of payments agreed at last meeting (all paid, or to be paid, electronically from new Lloyds bank account):

i) 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) EP2 with payment date of 14 March:  
Colton Village Hall – Room hire, Jan-March £45.00

iii) EP3 with payment date of 28 March:  
Alison James – Clerk's salary, March  
(370.96); Home working expenses, 4 weeks,  
8 Feb – 7 Mar (corrected to 16.00);  
Reimbursement for bank payment to magazine  
delivery girl on 27 Feb for March issue  
(20.00) Total corrected to £406.96

iv) EP4 with payment date of 31 March:  
HMRC – Payroll taxes, Q4 Jan-Mar £305.72

- b) To approve the following payments:

i) EP5 with payment date of 25 April:  
G Barlow – Delivery of May parish magazine £20.00

ii) EP6 with payment date of 30 April:  
Alison James – Clerk's salary, April  
(370.96); Home working expenses, 4 weeks,  
8 Mar – 4 Apr (16.00); Reimbursement for bank  
payment to magazine delivery girl on 27 Mar  
for April issue (20.00); Reimbursement for

black XL printer cartridge (£21.64 plus £4.33 VAT); BGC Clerk salary, 1 Jan – 31 Mar (137.50)	
less tax (27.50)	£542.93

- iii) EP7 with payment date of 16 April:  
Colton Burial Ground Admin Committee – Funds  
for 2025/26 for ongoing maintenance £1,000.00

(Total of new payments above for approval is £1,562.93)

Clerk explained that for the May issue onwards, the monthly payment for magazine delivery would be made electronically from the new PC account rather than her paying personally and being reimbursed. The payments at b) above were all approved.

## 6. Planning Matters

- a) To note any applications received and make observations to the Planning Authority:
  - i) 25/00211/LBC – Lower Newlands Farm, Newlands Lane, Blithbury – Works to listed building to enable repairs to the chimneys, roof and rainwater goods, localised repointing of external elevations including isolated brick replacements, isolated internal plaster repairs, window repairs and the introduction of secondary glazing – Received after issue of March agenda, discussed briefly at March meeting and no comments raised. LDC consultation deadline has now passed.
- b) To report on any recent decisions of the Planning Authority:
  - i) 25/00067/FUH – Pool Farm, Newlands Lane, Stockwell Heath – Conversion and extension of existing garage to form dwelling (annexe to existing dwelling) – Approved

Clerk had submitted PC comments agreed at the last meeting on recent application at School Cottage. LDC website showed that SCC Highways were not happy with visibility on exit from the property and were seeking additional information.

- 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) – Nothing further heard
- d) To consider parishioner email re additional caravan on Moor Lane – Standing orders were suspended for another parishioner (not the person who had sent the email) to comment that the additional caravan had only been there for a short time and appeared to have been a replacement for the original one. It was commented that the original permission was given for occupation by an agricultural worker and this had not appeared to be the case. However, LDC Enforcement had not pursued at the time and PC agreed not to take any further now. Standing orders reinstated.

## 7. Highways, Footpaths and Open Spaces

- a) To report on new issues or progress and agree any action required:
  - i) Flooding and highways maintenance including SCC investigations on Hollow Lane flooding and flooding by brook bridge – Clerk had tried to put SCC in contact with the Parish Lands Trust (PLT) before their last meeting as Land Registry records sent by SCC appeared to show that PLT owned some of the land to the north of Hollow Lane near the blocked drain. However, emails had not got through for some reason. **RM** reported that PLT did not think it was their land so would provide an email address for **Clerk** to contact the PLT Chairman to clarify.
  - 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 – No reply had been received from HS2 and it was thought that they had not done any hedge cutting so **Clerk** to press HS2 for a response.

- iii) Improving the appearance of the parish and any further work for parish handyperson – High St tidying had generated positive comments but there did not appear to be anything urgent needing doing at the moment. Moss on the path in the Open Burial Ground would be taken up by the BG Committee as part of their efforts to improve maintenance there.
- iv) Litter picking – Last year LDC or SCC staff were seen litter picking on Colton Rd and so it was decided that no community litter pick was needed then. **KV** was asked if he could find out which council is responsible and whether they have any plans to do it again so PC can decide if it is worth organising its own litter pick this year.
- v) Issue of speeding in the village raised by parishioners – Any progress with purchase/installation of electronic monitoring device or potential SCC speed survey – Covered during Parish Assembly.
- vi) Rights of way – any issues – Standing orders were suspended and parishioner explained that any issues encountered are reported direct to SCC online. They are generally low priority paths but get repaired eventually. However there is still the issue of the disputed footpath 28 near the top of High St, which is shown on the definitive map but cannot be accessed. PC agreed to ask SCC Rights of Way for an update (**Clerk**).
- vii) Overgrown hedge on Bellamour Way – covered during Parish Assembly
- viii) Suggestion from parishioner for priority road sign at brook bridge – Parishioner had raised issue with GE, who agreed that give way signs in both directions were confusing. It was suggested there should instead be a sign giving priority to traffic leaving the village and thereby slowing traffic entering the village. **Clerk** to ask Richard Cox how best to pursue this.

#### 8. To discuss plans for Colton Summer Festival on 28 June 2025 including donation offered by PLT

Arrangements were progressing well and bouncy castle had now been booked. NP had prepared some posters. Community Foundation had indicated that PC would be eligible to apply to the We Love Lichfield Fund, as putting on the Festival is not a statutory responsibility. **Clerk** to circulate the email for **Councillors** to decide if it is worth applying and how onerous.

#### 9. Correspondence

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

- a) SCC Highways – Temporary road closure on Newlands Lane (about 1,000m from junction with B5014 Uttoxeter Rd) on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May (Email, sent to magazine editor)
- b) SCC – Request for article for SCC publicity about how their Community Fund grant for the Colton Festival 2024 was used & benefits achieved (Email, circulated to cllrs) – **Clerk** would prepare the requested paragraph including one or more of the photos supplied by NP.
- c) SPCA – Various bulletins including Supportive Communities training & health data webinars (Emails, mainly circulated to cllrs)

## 10. Committees

To hear any update from the Burial Ground Committee – **GE** had fixed the latch on the gate to the Open Burial Ground and offered to cut down the wisteria. A cheque was signed for LDC's annual refuse collection. The BGC was in the process of specifying a list of the maintenance tasks it required from the contractors to try to improve care and appearance.

## 11. Finance and audit

- a) 2024/25 accounts – To note the requirement for completion and approval of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and related documentation by end June – The form and guidance had been received from the external auditors and the internal audit is arranged for 19 May. The 2025 version of the Practitioner's Guide says that PCs must have a gov.uk domain and email address for the Clerk. This transition would need to be pursued for 2025/26 once the AGAR has been completed (**Clerk**).
- b) To hear progress on actions required after 2024/25 interim audit – Any further discussion on Clerk's employment contract and insurance issues raised; Data protection notice – After checking, RM felt that the PC had adequate insurance cover. So the employment contract was signed by Clerk and NT as meeting chair and **Clerk** would provide electronic copy for PC retention.
- c) 2025/26 accounts – To note provision of new bank details to LDC for their precept payment due on 16 April – LDC had confirmed receipt of the new bank account details in time for setting up their precept payment run.
- d) To hear progress on actions in council's approved risk assessment document – Clerk had undertaken to report on progress on a quarterly basis. Various actions had been completed, such as putting certain documents in storage at Village Hall, disposing of redundant paperwork securely, preparing procedure notes and paying HMRC electronically. Others were underway such as setting up internet banking and related procedures. **Clerk** to continue to pursue other actions.
- 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 – The first set of electronic payments had been made but the procedures for set up and approval were not entirely clear. **Clerk** would be ringing Lloyds again to be talked through the process for the next set of payments, to ensure that 2 councillors are required to approve them in addition to the Clerk setting them up. Information about potential savings accounts for the PC reserves had been circulated. It was agreed that an instant access account should be opened to enable easy access to the precept and some back up funds, and then a 95-day notice account, with a higher interest rate, for the reserves (**Clerk** to pursue).

## 12. Parish Council matters

- a) To discuss progress with improved signage for Village Hall, raised by Cllr R Monbiot on behalf of VHMC – RM reported that VHMC needs to wait until after the County Council elections to see if Richard Cox is re-elected and can offer any funding.
- b) To consider any issues raised at prior Parish Assembly meeting or in correspondence – Covered in the minutes of the Assembly.

## 13. Date of next meeting – Rearranged to Thursday 15 May at 7pm (to ensure quorum) and consisting of Annual Meeting and then main Parish Council meeting