

## **COLTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> JULY AT 7PM AT COLTON VILLAGE HALL**

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

Parishioner did not wish to pursue previous request for a 'No-mow May' policy next year as it had met with several comments on social media from others in village who felt that the village entrance looked very untidy and did not present a good impression, particularly compared to other local villages. However, parishioner's main concern had been the loss of the special flowers that grow in the corner patch below the WI trough, which had not been clear in the PC minutes, an area presumably cut by LDC. It is understood that the PCC have adopted a no-mow May policy around the church and it is responsible for mowing on Pedley's Croft (although PC contribute to cost). The verge from the bridge to the main road was left a reasonable time before cutting to allow the wildflowers to seed. Apparently there has been some controversy in Little Haywood about the cost of the flowers paid for by its PC, even though volunteers plant and maintain. Councillors would discuss further during the meeting.

Mike Pyle attended as he would be moving out of the parish shortly and therefore wanted to return all the records he had kept about the War Memorial refurbishment and other information. It was agreed these records should be offered to the History Society. Clerk to retain the additional meter box key. Mike was thanked for all his work on the War Memorial during his time in Colton.

### **(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), Garren Edwards (GE), Richard Monbiot (RM) and Nigel Parry (NP) (arrived during Public Participation), County Councillor Janet Higgins (JH) (for session at start of meeting) and Clerk Alison James. Apologies received from District Councillor Keith Vernon. PC approved that NT chair the meeting.

#### 2. To receive declarations of interest – NT, GE and NP for payments relating to Festival expenses.

#### 3. To approve minutes of meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> June – Approved and signed by NT.

#### 4. Chair's Announcements – PC was sad to note the recent death of Tony Winter, previously a long serving parish councillor. He had also been responsible for much of the daffodil planting in the village. A minute's silence was held to remember him.

#### Staffordshire County Council issues raised with County Cllr Janet Higgins

As JH needed to leave by 8pm, it was agreed to take all the agenda items on SCC matters at the start of the meeting.

#### Speeding (agenda item 7 a) v) )

The main concern is the Rugeley to Admaston road (B5013) where there have recently been several accidents. The police are aware of the boy racers but other drivers are thought to go too fast on certain sections, particularly in the bends near Hamley Heath. The situation on Bellamour Way is in hand, as PC is pursuing installation of an electronic device to monitor speeds. JH said she had raised various issues at SCC and tried to contact her predecessor Richard Cox but apologised that, due to bereavement, she had not been able to pursue them as quickly as she had hoped. However, she had a meeting arranged with Highways later in the week.

#### Flooding (agenda item 7 a) i) )

JH said that the Reform councillors are making it a priority to sort out flooding issues. An update received by the Clerk from the Flood Risk Management team at SCC was read to the meeting. This included notification of a planned 'dig down' on 6<sup>th</sup> August to survey the culvert on Bellamour Way near 'Wyvern'. PC asked **JH** to establish with Highways at her meeting whether this would require a complete road closure. SCC email also raised the suggestion that Highways could install a debris screen to reduce the potential for blockages in the culvert and whether PC could take ownership and responsibility for its maintenance. SCC is also looking into whether a level gauge and/or CCTV camera might be of use to the village and at providing community dedicated website pages to hold monitoring information so people could check routes in advance. A meeting to discuss these issues with the PC was suggested. **Clerk** to see if SCC officers could attend prior to the September PC meeting. No mention was made in the SCC update of the situation at Hollow Lane so **JH** was asked to raise that with Highways too.

#### Newlands Lane (agenda item 7 a) i) )

The poor condition of the road was raised and JH had already been contacted direct by a parishioner. JH said SCC was also giving priority to sorting out potholes, but it was recognised that this lane was not designed for the size and weight of agricultural vehicles which use it.

#### Overgrown Bellamour Way yew hedge (agenda item 7 a) vi) )

The concerns and history were explained and **JH** was asked to raise with Highways again.

#### Village Hall signage (agenda item 12 a) )

It was unclear the source of funding Richard Cox had in mind when he had offered to help if re-elected. It may require a formal application from VHMC. **JH** to ask Highways about this.

#### Festival funding application (agenda item 8)

JH suggested the PC try to apply for funding. However it cannot apply 2 years in a row for the same thing so needs to change the details of the application.

#### Solar farms (agenda item 6 c) )

JH said that SCC cannot affect the planning applications already passed but is trying to find reasons for new applications to be rejected, concentrating on health and safety issues e.g. batteries catching fire and the need for 2-way road access. Stowe-by-Chartley PC had compiled a list of all Staffordshire applications for the meeting they called and JH asked to be notified if there were any new applications in the parish.

After these items, JH left the meeting.

### 5. Payments

- a) To confirm the final details of all payments approved at the June meeting (following issues with online access and authorisation in sufficient time):
  - i) EP14 – Cancelled. Paid instead by Clerk personally and included in July pay and expenses claim.  
(G Barlow – Delivery of July parish magazine £20.00)
  - ii) EP15 with payment date of 30 June:  
Alison James – Clerk's salary, June  
(370.96); Home working expenses, 3 weeks,  
17 May – 6 June (12.00) £382.96

- iii) EP16 with payment date of 30 June:  
HMRC – Payroll taxes for Q1 Apr – Jun,  
consisting of Tax (305.72) and Employer NI  
contributions (41.63) £347.35
  - iv) EP17 – Cancelled. Replaced by Lloyds cheque 000001.  
J Flint – Clearing weeds and general tidy up  
of area around Village Hall and play area  
(£100.00) and additional payment for first  
regular weeding/tidying session on 4 June  
(30.00) £130.00
  - v) EP18 with revised payment date of 30 June:  
K Squires – Internal audit 24/25 £155.00
  - vi) EP19 with revised payment date of 30 June:  
Cllr G Edwards – Reimbursement for dog  
poop bags (8.99) and Festival banner (45.83)  
plus VAT (9.17) £63.99
- b) To approve the following payments:
  - i) EP20 with payment date of 28 July:  
G Barlow – Delivery of August parish magazine £20.00
  - ii) EP21 with payment date of 31 July:  
Alison James – Clerk’s salary, July (370.96)  
Home working expenses, 3 weeks, 7 June –  
4 July excl.1 week leave (12.00); Payment to  
magazine delivery girl set up for 26 June to  
replace cancelled electronic payment (20.00);  
Reimbursement for set of 4 colour XL printer  
cartridges ordered 24 June (55.08) plus VAT  
(11.02); BGC Clerk salary for 1 April - 30 June  
(137.50) less tax (27.50) £579.06
  - iii) EP22 with payment date of 16 July:  
Cllr N Parry – Reimbursement for rubbish bag  
stand/holder for Festival (32.97) plus VAT (6.59) £39.56
  - iv) EP23 with payment date of 16 July:  
Trent Grounds Maintenance – Grass cutting in  
May – Closed BG, 2 cuts (96.00), Village Hall,  
1 cut (97.29), Stockwell Heath, 2 cuts (64.00),  
Heathway footpath, 1 cut (48.00) plus VAT  
(61.05) £366.34
  - v) EP24 with payment date of 16 July:  
Colton Village Hall – Hire of hall for Festival on  
28 June, 10am – 10pm £210.00
  - vi) EP25 with payment date of 16 July:  
Cllr N Talbot – Reimbursement for payment to  
band for Festival evening performance (400.00);  
Reimbursement for balance paid for Festival bouncy  
castle hire £ t.b.c.

- vii) EP26 - Payment date and amount to be confirmed:  
J Flint – Clearing weeds and tidying area  
around Village Hall and play area (Visits  
since 4 June)

£ t.b.c.

(Total of new payments for approval at item 5 b) is £1,214.96 plus additional amounts to be confirmed).

Various amendments were made to the list and additional payments, agreed as part of Festival planning, were approved for July as urgent. EP22 to Cllr N Parry needed to be increased to include reimbursement for the bouncy castle hire balance (£60.00) and various items for the dog show, to be calculated. EP25 to Cllr N Talbot was confirmed as £400.00 for the band only. EP26 to J Flint was confirmed as £30.00 for 1 visit on 27 June. Further payments were required to Print and Digital for car parking signs (£72.00), Stafford Morris Men for dancing (£80.00) and Cllr G Edwards for batteries for microphone (£14.00). All confirmed payment details would be listed on the September agenda for clarity.

- c) To approve the following payments in principle for August (as no council meeting to be held), with final details to be circulated to councillors by email and ratified at September meeting:
- i) J Flint for additional gardening at Village Hall
  - ii) Clerk's salary and expenses for August
  - iii) Magazine delivery for September issue
  - iv) Trent Grounds Maintenance for June, and possibly July, grass cutting including additional cutting for Festival

Re item 5 c) i), expenditure of £240 had previously been approved by PC to cover regular work visits to end September. It was suggested that it might be better if VHMC could pay the individual at the time of his work and invoice the PC on a monthly or quarterly basis. **RM** to pursue this with VHMC. Other payments were approved in principle.

## 6. Planning Matters

- a) To note any applications received and make observations to the Planning Authority:
  - i) 25/00693/FUH – 27 High Street, Colton – Demolition of existing front and rear conservatories, construction of porch, extensions to the front and rear and construction of a pitched roof over existing garage – No comments made by councillors
- b) To report on any recent decisions of the Planning Authority: None received by time of issue of agenda
- 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) and any feedback from Stowe-by-Chartley PC on meeting about concerns for all the solar farms in planning – See earlier discussion under SCC issues

## 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 – See earlier discussion under SCC issues
  - 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 – It was noted that a parishioner had kindly cut some of the hedges at Newlands Lane as HS2 was not meeting its responsibilities. The issue needed to be escalated somehow as Clerk had had no response to her email reports. NP noted that HS2 still arranges daily patrols of its land near the top of the High St. It was suggested that further contact with HS2 might benefit from giving them specific detail of the locations. **Clerk** to contact parishioner and then pursue with HS2.

- iii) Improving the appearance of the parish and any further work for parish handyperson – covered under item viii) below.
- iv) Litter picking – Health and safety issues had been raised for the proposed community litter pick and it was thought that the litter situation along the Colton Rd was not as bad as 2-3 years ago. PC decided to drop the idea of a litter pick and remove item from the agenda (**Clerk**).
- v) Speeding issue in the village raised by parishioners and speeding on Admaston Road and recent accidents – Any progress with purchase/installation of electronic monitoring device, potential SCC speed surveys or other action – NP reported a delay in development of the device but hoped to have more positive news in September. Other discussion covered under SCC issues.
- vi) Overgrown hedges on Bellamour Way and on Heathway – see earlier discussion under SCC issues
- vii) Suggestion from parishioner for priority road sign at brook bridge – Nothing to report
- viii) Email of 18 May from parishioner requesting the PC adopt a 'No mow May' policy in 2026 for the verges approaching the village – follow up on initial discussions and email of 14 June from another parishioner commenting about untidiness of village – Further to discussion during Public Participation, it was noted that there are differing views about encouraging wildlife vs keeping the parish looking tidy. LDC had clarified that, for the areas they cut on SCC's behalf, SCC do not have a 'No-mow May' policy. LDC do not have such a policy for their own land either but have instead set aside a few specific areas in the district to be wildlife havens. There would be maintenance and cost issues if planters were wanted in Colton for instance. **Clerk** to respond to parishioner's email, encouraging them to put forward any proposals for consideration and to suggest attending the September PC meeting. PC appreciates there are different points of view and is happy to listen to any proposals and see what might be done.
- ix) Issue with a public footpath sign at Stockwell Heath – A parishioner had reported to GE that walkers were ending up in someone's garden at Stockwell Heath. A new sign is needed and SCC Rights of Way had been contacted but the process did not appear straightforward. PC was happy in principle to pursue this and **Clerk** to contact parishioner for exact location.

#### 8. To consider feedback and any outstanding issues after Colton Summer Festival on 28 June

It was agreed that the Festival had been a major success, much helped by the good weather, with an estimated attendance of at least 250 people. A wash up meeting would be held the following evening. Whilst it would be nice, in principle, to hold another Festival next year, there was a lot of work involved and more helpers would be needed, especially on the day, if it were to go ahead. Re the duck race, the school PTA had already been told they could keep the proceeds from the tickets they sold. They also provided helpers on the day and it was agreed that the

remaining proceeds, after prize money had been deducted, would also be given to the PTA. Further money from stall fees and bar and ice cream van donations would be paid into the PC account (**NP**). Thank yous to be sent to the person who had arranged the vehicle free of charge for the band to play on (with small gift approved by PC) and John Dean for helping in the brook (**Clerk/NT**). As JH understood that applications could be retrospective, **Clerk** to apply to the newly-opened SCC Community Fund for £500 towards Festival costs.

## 9. Correspondence

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

- a) LDC – Arrangement of annual inspection of Village Hall play area (Email; confirmed by VHM that it is required and PC to be invoiced)
- b) SCC – Temporary road closure notice for Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> to Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July on Bellamour Lane (from outside Middle Cottage to near Colwich Lodge) for full fibre installation works (Email, summary posted on Residents' Facebook page)
- c) SCC – Temporary road closure notice for Monday 7<sup>th</sup> July for Moor Lane, Hamley Heath (outside Rose Cottage) for pole replacement works (Email, summary posted on Residents' Facebook page)
- d) SCC – Temporary road closure notice for overnight on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> August (into Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> August) 8pm – 6am, on B5013 Colton Road between roundabout on Rugeley Bypass and Blithbury Road for vegetation clearance (Email, sent to parish magazine editor and summary posted on Residents' Facebook page)
- e) Woodland Trust – Invitation to apply for free tree packs to plant for the community, offering deliveries of various tree types in early November (and March) (Email, circulated to cllrs)
- f) NALC – Various bulletins including update that government has accepted value of remote/hybrid meetings and proposes to amend legislation to allow it (Emails)
- g) SPCA – Various bulletins including campaign pack against the Government's decision to stop support and funding for Neighbourhood Plans, new edition of 'Local Councils Explained' and YouTube video of briefing on Local Government Reorganisation (Emails, mainly circulated to cllrs)

## 10. Committees

To hear any update from Burial Ground Committee – At the June meeting, the need to pay for large bins was raised, with the suggestion of using a compost heap instead, alongside smaller or cheaper bins and this was being explored.

## 11. Finance and audit

- a) 2024/25 accounts – To note the submission of the Certificate of Exemption to external auditors Forvis Mazars, the availability of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and other related information on the PC website and the current period for the Exercise of Electors' Rights - Noted
- b) To note the acceptance of appointment by Kim Squires as internal auditor for 2025/26 - Noted
- c) To hear any update on banking including adding R Monbiot as additional signatory on Lloyds account, statements and invoices to go paper-free and closure of NatWest accounts – RM had received a bank card but nothing else so **Clerk** to enquire of Lloyds. Bank letter handed to **NP** so it was hoped he

could now regain online access. **Clerk** to provide reminder to **NT** of what is required by NatWest to go ahead with closure of those accounts.

12.Parish Council matters

- a) To discuss any progress with improved signage for Village Hall, raised by Cllr R Monbiot on behalf of VHMC – see earlier discussion under SCC issues.
- b) To consider any possible nominees as replacement PC representative on Parish Lands Trust – Tony Winter had been one of the PC representatives. In view of the small number of councillors and that they also sit on the BGC, no nomination was forthcoming. **Clerk** to ask PLT about the function and status of the PC representatives.

13.Date of next meeting – Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September at 7pm (No meeting in August)

Meeting closed at 9.05pm