

COLTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 4th FEBRUARY 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, who has been trying to arrange planting of memorial snowdrops, referred to minutes of previous PC meeting where PC had said that the licence from Highways was not acceptable because it placed responsibility on PC to take over maintenance of the relevant verges. Parishioner asked if that was the only aspect of concern to PC in the licence and Chair, Noel Talbot, confirmed that was the case. (The licence cannot be signed by an individual and therefore it would need to be signed by PC). Parishioner therefore proposed to go back to her SCC contact to request that the PC's mowing responsibility is removed. This on the basis that there are already daffodils in those verges and SCC still take responsibility for the mowing. Snowdrops were deliberately chosen as they flower before the daffodils and therefore should not affect mowing. County Cllr Janet Higgins and District Councillor Keith Vernon were present and agreed that planting the snowdrops was a nice idea and they hoped that it could be possible. **Clerk** agreed to copy recent correspondence with SCC on this topic to Janet Higgins, so she could make enquiries at SCC.

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

BUSINESS AGENDA

1. To note attendance and receive apologies for absence

In attendance were Cllrs Noel Talbot (NT), Garren Edwards (GE), Richard Monbiot (RM) and Nigel Parry (NP), County Cllr Janet Higgins (JH) (left after item 11), District Cllr Keith Vernon (KV) (left after item 11) and Clerk Alison James. 1 member of the public observed. NP proposed and GE seconded that NT chair the meeting.

2. To receive declarations of interest - None

3. To approve minutes of the meeting held on 7th January – Minutes were approved and signed by NT.

4. Chair's Announcements

A letter had been received from a parishioner after issue of the agenda commenting on foliage overhanging Hollow Lane. NT had asked if anyone could check the situation before this meeting and NP said he did not think it was of particular concern. It was necessary to find out if it was SCC Highways' responsibility or a landowner. **Cllrs** were asked to look before the next meeting and **Clerk** to put on March agenda. JH offered to pursue if it was thought to be a Highways responsibility. It was noted that PC had recently arranged urgent removal of a fallen tree on the road.

5. Payments

a) To note the following payments approved for January:

- i) EP57 with payment date of 27 January:
M Barlow – Delivery of February parish magazine £20.00
- ii) EP58 with payment date of 30 January:
Alison James – Clerk's salary, January (382.83);
Home working expenses, 4 weeks, 6 Dec – 9 Jan,
less 1 week's annual leave (16.00); Burial Ground
Clerk salary, 1 Oct – 31 Dec (137.50) less tax
(27.50); Reimbursement for 2 black XL printer

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|------|---|---------|
| | Cartridges (36.93) plus VAT (7.39) | £553.15 |
| iii) | EP59 with <u>revised</u> payment date of 23 January (due to delay in authorisation):
Colton Village Hall – Room hire for Sept – Dec
PC meetings plus SCC FAIR Community meeting | £75.00 |
| iv) | EP61 with <u>revised</u> payment date of 23 January (due to delay in authorisation):
Lichfield District Council – Annual play area
inspection (75.00) plus VAT (15.00) | £90.00 |

Payment EP60 (to Colton Village Hall for tidying of flower beds in summer/autumn) was deferred, as the invoice was still under query at the time of the meeting. Payment EP61 was additionally agreed as the invoice had just been received from LDC with payment due on receipt and had previously been agreed as a PC commitment.

Total of payments approved was £738.15. In addition, Lloyds bank charge of £4.25 was debited on 19 January.

Clerk confirmed that she had not yet received a revised invoice from VHMC for EP60. **RM** to contact treasurer as he had understood one had been issued.

- b) To approve the following payments for February:
- i) EP62 with payment date of 26 February:
M Barlow – Delivery of March parish magazine £20.00
 - ii) EP63 with payment date of 27 February:
Alison James – Clerk’s salary, February (382.83);
Home working expenses, 4 weeks, 10 Jan – 6 Feb,
(16.00) £398.83
 - iii) EP64 with potential payment date of 27 February:
TGM – Gritting of additional roads in December
(Invoice expected at end January) t.b.c.

Total of payments to be approved is £418.83 plus 1 payment to be confirmed.

Payments EP62 and EP63 were approved. No invoice had been received from TGM since the issue of the agenda so the payment was deferred to March (**Clerk**).

6. Planning Matters

- a) To note any applications received and make observations to the Planning Authority:
- i) 25/01579/COU (Change of use) – Stables off Jonghams Lane, Hamley Heath Barn, Jonghams Lane, Hamley Heath – Conversion, alteration and extension of stable block to form 1 dwellinghouse – Received immediately prior to January PC meeting so discussed then in view of late January deadline for comments. Response of no objections submitted to LDC.

KV said that he had been asked to call this application in so it will go before LDC’s Planning Committee. There had been an objection and, having been to look himself, he thought that the metal stable building was somewhat unsuitable to become a dwelling.

- ii) 25/01590/PND (Prior Notification Dwelling) – Land at Newlands Lane, Malt House Farm, Stockwell Heath – Prior Notification: Conversion of agricultural building to form 6 dwellings with associated operational development – Received immediately prior to January PC meeting so

discussed then in view of late January deadline for comments. Concerns raised about additional traffic due to state of Newlands Lane and regular flooding in the vicinity, also lack of light impact assessment for wildlife and community. Comments submitted to LDC.

Clerk had checked the LDC website a few days before the meeting to see if any other objections or comments had been raised. LDC's arboricultural officer had said they required additional information.

- b) To report on any recent decisions of the Planning Authority: None received by time of issue of agenda

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 of culvert under Bellamour Way and Hollow Lane drainage and any further correspondence with SCC FAIR team – The FAIR team had sent an update that works at Hollow Lane were currently scheduled to start on 16th March. PC agreed that details of the works could be publicised via the parish magazine, residents page on Facebook and PC website and that there was no need for another community meeting at this stage (**Clerk** to reply to SCC). It was noted that flood waters had generally subsided quickly and Hollow Lane had not been flooded so far this winter. Drains blocked on Newlands Lane had meant additional flood water joined the brook.
 - ii) Improving the appearance of the parish including clarifying mowing responsibilities – Clerk had nothing to add yet to previous map showing areas of mowing responsibilities. Work to tidy area at side of High Street again would be arranged when the weather had improved.
 - iii) Speeding issue in the village raised by parishioners and speeding on Admaston Road – Any update re electronic monitoring device for Bellamour Way; Further correspondence between County Councillors, Highways and others to discuss B5013 speeding and traffic surveys following postponement of meeting on 9th January due to weather; Any response from County Cllr Janet Higgins re Neighbourhood Speed Check Initiative – A further meeting had been arranged for 27th February to discuss ownership of the car park at the reservoir and potential measures there. GE did not plan to attend as he did not think he had anything to contribute. JH is unable to attend that meeting but would continue to pursue the issues. The 3 County Cllrs involved are paying for speed counts on the affected roads in their areas (JH for B5013 between Admaston Bank and Moor Lane) and it had been pointed out that the counts should be early summer and include evenings when the racers are active.
NP said that the electronic monitoring device suggested for Bellamour Way is still in development so would not be available in the foreseeable future.

8. To consider any further information regarding Remembrance Sunday responsibilities and practical arrangements

Further information is awaited from parishioner so **Clerk** to chase.

9. Correspondence

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

- a) SCC – Road closure notice for the length of Newlands Lane from Thursday 5th February for 1 day but no more than 5 days, for carriageway repairs in the vicinity of the entrance to Blithford Farm (Email, sent to parish magazine and posted on Colton Residents Facebook page)
- b) HS2 Ltd – Information about Government’s Northern Growth Strategy and that government will be retaining its existing land holdings along the former HS2 Phase 2a route from West Midlands to Crewe (Email, circulated to cllrs)
- c) LDC – Parish Network meeting on Monday 26th January (Email, circulated to cllrs)
- d) SPCA and NALC – Various bulletins including offer of free community tree packs from Woodland Trust and further briefings on the Best Kept Village and Community Awards 2026 (Emails, some circulated to cllrs) – GE had read the piece about Operation Snap, which enables people to report parking issues, use of mobile phone whilst driving etc. to West Midlands Police. Staffordshire Police do not support the system but another PC was looking for support from others to ask Staffordshire to use it. PC agreed to register its support (**Clerk** to email).

In addition to item 9 a), 3 other road issues had recently been raised with JH by email and she had been able to follow up with Highways so details were discussed:

Stoneyford Lane – JH had driven to the meeting that way and agreed it is awful. Highways said that temporary repairs had been made to urgent potholes on 23 January, per road closure notice received. But weather and resource issues had delayed permanent repairs. JH would pursue and said that SCC had allocated additional money to tackle the backlog of repairs to rural roads.

Junction of High St and Newlands Lane – Highways said a temporary repair of the pothole there had been made on 23 January but a more permanent repair requires resources and that heavy agricultural vehicles and flooding mean the repairs do not last! Highways also said they did not have a record of a gully on their maps. They asked to be sent photos whenever it is flooded.

JH stressed that issues should be reported on the Highways online system as often as possible, as the more reports, the higher the priority that will be given. She is pushing for more action but it is difficult to get priority for rural areas.

Flood water on Admaston Rd – Highways said an officer had inspected in January and raised a request for appropriate works. JH would let PC know when scheduled. It was stressed that it is an unlit road and drivers are unable to see the flood water, especially if approaching at speed from the direction of Abbots Bromley, hence it is dangerous.

In conclusion, JH commented on how difficult it is to get action at SCC.

JH also reminded the PC of her previous email about arranging a site visit by a Highways officer to show them the issues affecting the parish and requesting someone from PC to accompany her (**Councillors**). JH would let PC know any date arranged.

Although outside Colton parish, NP also raised the state of Pipe Lane which was affecting access to a caravan storage area there and had generated many complaints. **Clerk** thought there had recently been a road closure notice issued and would check and JH said she would look into this too.

It was noted that some of the hedges on HS2 land had been cut recently but it was unclear whether this was done by HS2 or someone else.

10. Committees

To hear any update from Burial Ground Committee – There had been discussion recently about the rules for memorials in the Open Burial Ground, whether they were made available to relatives at the time of purchasing a plot and how strictly the rules should be applied. The BGC would need to reach a consensus before or at its next meeting in April.

11. Finance and audit

- a) 2025/26 accounts – To receive updated summary of receipts and payments compared to budget for financial year to end January – Clerk had circulated a report, which showed that expenditure to date was on track.
- b) 2025/26 accounts – To receive and sign the bank reconciliation at end December 2025 – It was agreed that the reconciliation report would be signed after the meeting, to provide the evidence required for audit.
- c) 2025/26 accounts – To consider requirements and best practice to meet Assertion 10 of Annual Governance Statement including gov.uk email addresses for Clerk and councillors and gov.uk website domain – As PC is happy with its current website design, Clerk had emailed current website hosts Vision ICT asking various questions about costs and practicalities for moving to a gov.uk domain and email addresses but, despite chasing, had yet to receive a reply. **Clerk** to pursue, as some evidence of progress would be needed for audit and the Annual Governance Statement at the end of the financial year.
- d) 2026/27 accounts - To confirm precept request was submitted to LDC before its 22 January deadline – Clerk confirmed request was submitted on time.
- e) To hear any update on banking including adding R Monbiot for internet access to Lloyds account and closure of NatWest accounts – RM said he was in dispute with Lloyds concerning a personal account and so would not be arranging internet access soon. However, NP confirmed his new card is now activated so he has access again. Thus 3 councillors should be available to authorise. **Clerk** to submit a new application to transfer funds from NatWest, specifying different authorisers. The previous attempt failed due to one councillor's signature not matching the bank's records.
- f) To confirm completion of PC's 3-yearly re-declaration of compliance for pensions automatic enrolment – PC is not required to automatically enrol the Clerk in a pension scheme as the salary is not high enough. This must be confirmed every 3 years and had been done in January.
- g) To consider any update on arrangements for agreed donation for memorial snowdrops to be planted in village – Covered during Public Participation.
- h) To review the PC's risk assessment document and agree any actions – Clerk had updated the PC's existing risk assessment document and circulated it for comment. Good governance requires appropriate management of risks and annual review of the risk assessment. RM said he did not think the current document was appropriate as it did not identify risks clearly nor categorise them. He had obtained a template from Doveridge PC and proposed this be adapted for Colton. Clerk suggested that the current document was adopted and put on the website to meet the audit requirement for review during the 2025/26 financial year, which was agreed. **Clerk** to then produce a draft based on the Doveridge template for review at the April meeting.

12. Other Parish Council matters

- a) To hear any update on future arrangements for maintenance of the parish defibrillators – NT had spoken to landlord at Dun Cow about moving the defibrillator outside the pub to enable it to be available for use at any time. A box would be needed to enclose it as it was the one that came from HS2 without one. Richard Birkin is giving up checking the defibrillators after several years and would supply details of what is required to make the checks and what type of box needs to be purchased.
- b) To consider parishioner request for lights in the village for Christmas -
Some parishioners had suggested that there should be some more attractive festive lights, as in other local villages. NP had made some enquiries and had arranged a site meeting with a local company to find out possibilities and costs. It was suggested that a member of PCC be invited to be involved in the site meeting before further discussions.
- c) To consider whether a Colton Festival should be held in 2026 – Public meeting arranged for 24 February to decide.

13. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 4th March at 7pm

NP gave his apologies in advance for the April, May and June meetings.

Meeting closed at 8:05pm