

## **COLTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 4<sup>th</sup> MARCH 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: Highways had acknowledged the yew hedge on Bellamour Way is a hazard and had passed it onto their contractors, Amey, to deal with. However, they did not consider it high priority so not expecting any action soon. Had seen road sweeper in village but thought it ineffective, so had rung the company and sent photos. Asked for an update on speed warning sign on Bellamour Way, as still believes that some cars are speeding significantly.

PC said it is still waiting for the development of an electronic device to go on a lamppost to collect speed data. That device is not a speed warning sign.

**(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), District Councillor Keith Vernon (KV) and Clerk Alison James. 2 members of the PCC attended for item 4 and 2 members of the public observed. GE proposed and NP seconded that NT chair the meeting. Apologies had been received from County Councillor Janet Higgins (JH), who had asked to be informed of any issues the PC would like her to follow up. **Clerk** to email to request she attend the next meeting to give updates on the various Highways issues raised previously.

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

#### 3. To approve minutes of the meeting held on 4th February - Minutes were approved and signed by NT.

#### 4. To discuss proposed wild area and possible festive lighting near church with PCC representatives to gain mutual understanding of objectives and exchange ideas

NP had arranged a site meeting with a company who provide lights to SCC. The idea was to find out what might be possible and the potential costs of improved festive lighting and PCC had been invited to attend too. They had looked at dismantling the existing lights and providing lighting on 2 smaller trees nearby, with required cabling etc. Costs were awaited from the company. PCC had been surprised to receive the invitation to the site meeting, as PC had not asked for PCC views beforehand. PCC had already been considering possible developments in lighting for some time and PLT had kindly offered to potentially fund some improvements. The tree used currently is dying but LDC's tree officer will not agree to it being removed. PCC was pleased that the PC is interested in improving festive lighting and it was agreed that 3-way working between PCC, PC and PLT would be most productive. Further discussions could be held when some costs were available. It was suggested that the PC may be able to use its CIL money towards lighting.

Following concerns raised that the area may look unkempt, PCC explained its decision to develop a wild area by the church. It was trialled last year and received lots of positive comments. Neat paths are mown through longer grass so that it is clear it is being maintained, whilst encouraging biodiversity, which is a church objective for churchyards. Oak posts are also to be installed along verges near the church to prevent parking there, as that has consistently damaged the verges. PCC

are confident this will not detract from the appearance of the area by the church and the entry to the village.

#### 5. Chair's Announcements - None

#### 6. Payments

a) To note the following payments approved 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

Total of payments approved was £418.83. In addition, Lloyds bank charges of £4.25 were debited on 17 February.

b) To approve the following payments for March:

- i) EP64 with payment date of 13 March:  
TGM – Additional road gritting on 5 dates  
in January (487.50) plus VAT (97.50) £585.00
- ii) EP65 with payment date of 13 March:  
M.B. Contracts – Removal of tree fallen over  
Hollow Lane (70.00) plus VAT (14.00) £84.00
- iii) EP66 with payment date of 13 March:  
Colton Village Hall – Room hire for January to  
April PC meetings £60.00
- iv) EP67 with payment date of 26 March:  
M Barlow – Delivery of April parish magazine £20.00
- v) EP68 with payment date of 27 March:  
Alison James – Clerk's salary, March (382.83);  
Home working expenses, 4 weeks, 7 Feb – 6 Mar,  
(16.00); PC mobile top up to EE on 20 Feb (10.00)  
Mileage expenses for Apr25 to Feb26, 91 miles  
for 13 attendances @ 45p/mile (40.95) £449.78

Total of payments for approval above is £1,198.78.

Clerk said that the payment date for EP68 needed to be amended to 31 March. In addition, she had forgotten to list the Q4 payment of PAYE and Employer NI (362.95) to HMRC. Although not due until 19 April, this would ideally be paid on 31 March rather than being left till the new financial year, which would distort the annual figures. This was approved. The donation of £75.00 for snowdrops, agreed previously, was also approved for payment in March. It would be paid to the parishioner who had purchased 2,100 snowdrops and had provided the bulb company's larger invoice to the Clerk as evidence.

The Clerk had received another invoice for gardening at the Village Hall from the VHMC. However, it duplicated one sent earlier and still appeared to include costs not payable by PC and which were also much higher than approved in advance by PC. RM explained that he had now checked the charges and the gardener's attendances that he had signed off and asked **Clerk** to confirm what PC had already paid to the gardener direct.

#### 7. Planning Matters

a) To note any applications received and make observations to the Planning Authority:

- i) 26/00201/FUL – Land at Newlands Lane, Stockwell Heath (Malt House Farm) – Demolition of agricultural building and the erection of 4

dwellings (Use Class C3) – This application is additional to the application at the same site listed at item 7 b) i). Various comments had been made by councillors by email, emphasising the problems with the surface of Newlands Lane and the flooding there, making the additional traffic from the proposed new dwellings impractical. **Clerk** to submit comments to LDC.

- b) To report on any recent decisions of the Planning Authority:
  - i) 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 - Refused

#### 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 SCC investigations of culvert under Bellamour Way and Hollow Lane drainage and any further correspondence with SCC FAIR team; flooding on Admaston Rd; Newlands Lane flooding report response – NT commented that after 2 periods of heavy rain, Hollow Lane had remained open and flooding by the brook subsided within about 6 hours. Sonja from the FAIR team had visited 1 of the houses on Bellamour Way which had experienced bad flooding in its garden and cellar. FAIR team wanted to investigate drainage from fields, in particular one behind the Village Hall. GE had obtained contact details for the landowner so this could be investigated further. GE had sent videos to the SCC FAIR team showing water coming up out of a drain and out of the repair on Bellamour Way. These had been passed on to Highways and SCC FAIR are still pursuing this issue.
  - ii) State of roads – Stoneyford Lane and Junction of High St and Newlands Lane – NT confirmed that Stoneyford Lane is still in very poor condition and any repairs done had not lasted or been sufficient. This had been raised previously with JH and would be pursued.
  - iii) Speeding issue in the village raised by parishioners and speeding on Admaston Road – Further correspondence between County Councillors, Highways and others to discuss B5013 speeding and traffic surveys; Any further information from County Cllr Janet Higgins re Neighbourhood Speed Check Initiative – Nothing further to report, other than update during Public Participation.
  - iv) Roadside foliage on Hollow Lane – Councillors had checked on the area reported and did not feel there was any significant overhang and it was certainly not affecting traffic. As the bank is steep at that point, it would need to be cut by a contractor. **Clerk** to contact Highways to check if they would arrange to cut.
  - v) Improving the appearance of the parish including clarifying mowing responsibilities and parishioner suggestion for work party in village – **GE** to contact workman to repeat tidying of area part way up High Street on right hand side and to possibly clean any moss and dirt off the war memorial.

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

Parishioner involved in actioning the road closure for Remembrance Sunday each year had provided details of what is involved, so PC understood what would be required if it had to take this on in future. Clerk had circulated to councillors for information and would keep a copy in PC records.

## 10. Correspondence

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

- a) SPCA – Statutory consultation, on behalf of government, on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Staffordshire, setting out the proposals from the various district and county councils. Also briefing webinar on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March at 10.30am (Emails circulated to cllrs) – Clerk to join the webinar for general information. KV commented that LDC proposed a unitary authority formed from Lichfield District, Tamworth Borough and East Staffordshire and does not want to be merged with Stoke. Various other proposals had been put forward and it is not yet clear what the Government will decide.
- b) LDC – Letter to PC about the LGR and seeking support for its proposals for 3 unitary authorities in Staffordshire (Email, circulated to cllrs)
- c) SCC – Road closure notice for Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March for Uttoxeter Road, Blithbury between Blithbury Road and Stoneyford Lane, for pole replacement works (Email, posted on Colton Residents Facebook page)
- d) Keep Britain Tidy – The Great British Spring Clean between 13-29 March (Email)
- e) Community Foundation for Staffordshire and Shropshire – Details of categories for Best Kept Village and Community Awards 2026, with closing date of 30<sup>th</sup> April (Email, circulated to cllrs)
- f) SPCA and NALC – Various bulletins including SPCA Member Survey, new business planning course and Health and Wellbeing How-To course by Zoom, Eden Project webinar about The Big Do, combining the Big Lunch and The Big Help Out, proposed for 5-8 June (Emails, some circulated to cllrs)

## 11. Committees

To hear any update from the Burial Ground Committee – Clerk had received a memorial application, which was signed by NT as chair, subject to **Clerk** confirming that the requested design was consistent with other memorials in the Open Burial Ground.

## 12. Finance and audit

- a) 2025/26 accounts – To receive updated summary of receipts and payments compared to budget and forecast of position at end of financial year – Summary and forecast reports had been circulated and showed an expected excess of income at year end.
- b) To note submission of VAT claim for 2023/24 (£925.50), with VAT claim for 2024/25 in preparation at time of issue of agenda – 2023/24 claim had been received from HMRC within about 10 days of submission. **Clerk** to submit 2024/25 claim by the end of the week, as annual income would remain below the threshold of £25,000 for exemption from external audit.
- c) 2025/26 accounts – To agree any earmarking of funds required at end of financial year – PC confirmed that the unspent part of the play area budget (about £520) would be put into the earmarked reserve for future play area replacement or development, as in recent years. The reserve containing HS2 money for survey access at Stockwell Heath would be used to cover grass cutting at Stockwell Heath (£224), as previously. CIL money of £1,120.39 would be put into an earmarked reserve as it must be spent according to CIL criteria and cannot be put into general reserves. There were no other changes.

- d) 2025/26 accounts – To note letter received from Internal Auditor Kim Squires confirming independence – It is now an audit requirement that independence is confirmed each year by the internal auditor and approved by the PC.
- e) 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 – Information and costs for moving the website to a gov.uk domain and setting up email addresses had been obtained from the current website provider, Vision ICT. Clerk had joined a webinar about internal audit and the presenter had emphasised the importance of having the new gov.uk email address for the Clerk very soon. If the external auditors had to send the annual return form to the Hotmail address, this would immediately flag up that PC was not meeting the audit requirement for a gov.uk email address this financial year. Parish Online had confirmed the availability of the colton-pc.gov.uk domain and that they would provide a free email address for the Clerk. PC authorised **Clerk** to arrange this new email address. This would then secure the domain name for the future but PC was happy to leave the website as an org.uk domain for the time being, as a gov.uk website domain is not yet a requirement.
- f) To consider disposal of 2 redundant PC laptops held by Clerk – Clerk was still holding the 2 previous PC laptops and was unsure how best to dispose of them securely. **Clerk** to bring laptops to next meeting.
- g) To hear any update on banking including adding R Monbiot for internet access to Lloyds account and closure of NatWest accounts – RM still in dispute with Lloyds re personal accounts so no progress made for PC account. The NatWest accounts had now been closed and all funds transferred to the Lloyds current account. PC had previously agreed to open instant access and notice savings accounts with Lloyds. **GE** offered to check current interest rates and suggest the best approach.
- h) To hear update on arrangements and licence for memorial snowdrops to be planted in village and for PC donation to be made – After support from JH and parishioner's pressure, SCC had agreed to remove the verge maintenance requirement from the planting licence. Parishioner had purchased a large quantity of bulbs and planting was being arranged. Agreed donation of £75 to be made per item 6 b). Two copies of the planting licence were signed by PC. **Clerk** to send to SCC, as requested, for its signature and return of 1 copy for PC records.

### 13. Other Parish Council matters

- a) To consider future arrangements for maintenance of the parish defibrillators including potential purchase of exterior cabinet – Clerk had obtained an idea of the cost of an unlocked exterior cabinet, to enable the machine donated by HS2 to be moved outside the Dun Cow pub. LDC had confirmed this could be purchased from CIL money but it was also suggested that PC asks JH if her community funding could cover it (**Clerk**).
- b) To hear any update on parishioner request for lights in the village for Christmas – covered at item 4.
- c) To decide whether a Colton Festival should be held in 2026 following public meeting held on 24 February – Attendance had been good and attendees were keen to go ahead with a festival and willing to help. However, councillors were concerned that no-one had offered to take responsibility for specific events. Also, the band that played last time were no longer available

on the proposed date. Another band was suggested and availability would be checked. A follow up meeting is to be held on 26 March.

- d) To consider arrangements for annual parish assembly – It was agreed that arrangements last year had worked well so would be repeated. There would be an open session before the next PC meeting in April from 7.15pm to 7.45pm, to be advertised in the magazine, on the noticeboard and on Colton Residents Facebook page (**Clerk**).

14. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April at 7.15pm, consisting of Assembly session then main meeting (and to follow a Burial Ground Committee meeting starting at 6.45pm).

Meeting closed at 8.40pm.