

COLTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 24th JUNE AT 7PM AT COLTON VILLAGE HALL

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A parishioner had recently reported that a woman was camping by the pond at Stockwell Heath and there had been at least one disturbance late at night. One of the councillors had gone to speak to her to ask how long she intended to stay but no date was given. Parishioner had been advised to contact 101 if they had any safety concerns.

Clerk understood that the land by the pond is common land, which was entrusted to the care of the PC many years ago. According to the Gov.uk website, camping on common land is not allowed without the permission of the landowner. Concerns were expressed about why she was there and health and sanitation issues.

PC agreed to monitor the situation for a couple of weeks, expecting that she would move on. However, if she was still there then PC will discuss further what action to take. **Clerk** to inform parishioner of this approach.

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) and Clerk Alison James. No apologies had been received from District or County Councillors but Clerk had advised them that this agenda was mainly limited to financial items and the following week's meeting would revert to a full agenda. NP proposed and GE seconded that NT chair the meeting.

2. To receive declarations of interest - None

3. To approve minutes of the Annual Council meeting and main PC meeting held on 6th May – Minutes were approved and signed by NT.

4. Chair's Announcements

That morning a willow tree had been found to have fallen over the brook onto a footbridge. RM had immediately contacted other councillors, who had agreed that a local contractor should be instructed to remove it. It was due to be removed by the following day and this had been publicised on the Facebook residents' page.

NP commented that a footpath beyond the Martlins, heading towards Rydal Estate, appeared to have been planted over. After checking an Ordnance Survey map, it appeared that the footpath runs diagonally across the field, which was now in crop. Clerk had also received an email from a member of the public commenting on the state of footpaths and stiles on Martlin Hill and a field with an electric fence and no diversion signed. **Clerk** to reply explaining that footpaths are the responsibility of SCC not the PC and encourage them to report online. **Clerk** to also ask a parishioner if they can confirm the situation with these paths.

5. Payments

- a) To confirm the following payments for May:
 - i) EP77 with payment date of 22 May:
Colton Village Hall – Reimbursement for gardening charges paid for 11 visits July – Nov 2025 £330.00
 - ii) EP78 with payment date of 27 May:
M Barlow – Delivery of June parish magazine £20.00
 - iii) EP79 with payment date of 29 May:
Alison James – Clerk's salary, May (382.83);
Home working expenses, 5 weeks, 4 Apr – 8 May,

	(20.00); Top up of PC mobile on 20 Apr (10.00)	£412.83
iv)	EP80 with payment date of 29 May: Starboard Systems Ltd - Scribe Accounts subscription to 30 June 2027 (372.00) plus VAT (74.40)	£446.40
v)	EP81 with payment date of 22 May: Arthur J Gallagher Insurance Brokers - PC insurance for 1 June to 31 May 2027	£738.45

Total of payments approved was £1,947.68. In addition, bank charges of £4.25 were debited on 19 May.

- a) To approve the following payments for June:
 - i) EP82 with payment date of 29 June:
M Barlow – Delivery of July parish magazine £20.00
 - ii) EP83 with payment date of 30 June:
Alison James – Clerk's salary, June (382.83);
Home working expenses, 7 weeks, 9 May –
26 Jun (28.00); Renewal of Microsoft 365
subscription to 9 May 2027 (84.99) £495.82
 - iii) EP84 with payment date of 30 June:
HMRC – Payroll taxes, Q1 Apr – Jun (314.63)
and Employer NI contributions (48.32) £362.95
 - iv) EP85 with payment date of 30 June:
TGM – Grass cutting in March, April and May –
Village Hall, 2 cuts in May (200.42); Closed Burial
Ground, 6 cuts in March – May (296.64);
Stockwell Heath, 2 cuts in May (65.92) plus
VAT (112.59) £675.57

Total of payments for approval is £1,554.34.

All the payments above were approved so **Clerk** to email **Councillors** very soon seeking online authorisation.

6. Finance and audit

- a) To receive the final report of receipts and payments compared to budget for 2025/26 and the bank reconciliation at 31st March 2026

Reports had been circulated to councillors a few weeks before and showed income above budget and expenditure below budget. So total PC funds had increased by about £6,000 over the year to end March, to £38,519.23. The bank reconciliation was signed by NT. The additional funds could be spent in the current financial year instead, although it was noted that spending over £25,000 would mean that the PC could no longer claim exemption from external audit. The threshold may be increased in future but is still in place for the current financial year at least.

- b) To note the letter of Conclusion of Internal Audit for 2025/26 from Kim Squires and the Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26, forming page 4 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

Kim Squires had provided a satisfactory Internal Audit Report for the AGAR, together with a more detailed letter. The new Assertion 10 in the Annual Governance Statement, concerning effective IT and data management, required various policies and procedures to be in place, most importantly a gov.uk email address for the Clerk. That requirement had been met but an IT policy and a Data Audit document had not yet been prepared. However, Kim Squires said that auditors had been advised to show some discretion in the first year. As a

majority of the requirements had been met, she had therefore said in her AGAR report that the related objective had been satisfactorily met. **Clerk** to prepare a draft IT policy and also a formal Data Audit document for review, to ensure these were in place before the next audit.

- c) To complete, approve and sign the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2025/26, forming Section 1 of the AGAR

Taking account of the Internal Auditor's report, PC went through the 10 statements on the AGS and confirmed there is a sound system of internal control in place and all the statements could be answered Yes. The AGS was then signed by NT, as chair of the meeting, and the Clerk.

- d) To approve and sign the Accounting Statements 2025/26, forming Section 2 of the AGAR

The Accounting Statements were approved and signed by NT as chair of the meeting, having already been signed by the Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer before presentation to the PC.

- e) To approve and sign the Certificate of Exemption (AGAR 2025/26 Form 2 page 3) for submission to the external auditors by 30th June

The Certificate of Exemption was approved by the PC and signed by NT as chair of the meeting and the Clerk. **Clerk** to submit to the external auditors, Mazars, before 30th June.

- f) To note the proposed Period for the Exercise of Electors' Rights, being announced on Friday 26th June and covering the period Monday 29th June to Friday 7th August

The Period for the Exercise of Electors' Rights was noted. **Clerk** to put the notice on the PC website on 26th June.

- g) To note the transparency requirements for reports including the AGAR to be displayed on the PC website

The main pages of the AGAR together with various other required analyses would also be uploaded to the website on 26th June, with copies of the main pages being put on the PC noticeboard as soon as possible thereafter (**Clerk**).

- h) To agree the appointment of an internal auditor for 2026/27

PC preferred to remain with an auditor who was familiar with the PC and therefore agreed to appoint Kim Squires as internal auditor for the 2026/27 financial year. **Clerk** to confirm to Kim Squires.

7. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 1st July at 7.30pm (to follow Burial Ground Committee meeting/inspections).

Items on tidying up the village and maintenance of the defibrillators were requested for the next agenda, to be issued the following day (**Clerk**).

Arrangements for the Burial Ground inspections and meeting were also discussed, to enable the **Clerk** to issue the necessary documents the following day.

Meeting closed at 7.40pm