

Parish Council of Coleford

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Newsletter August 2020

Highways

The Parish Council has been invited to comment on the Anchor Road Small improvement scheme which would see a footway installed on Anchor Road before the junction of Farley Dell. This would make pedestrian access along this part of the road much safer so let's hope that this is progressed swiftly.



Footpaths

Both the North and South Footpath reports had been received from our fantastic Footpath Wardens. These have been submitted to the Somerset County Council Rights of Way team for action but the Parish Council are also reviewing the reports to see if there are any repairs or improvements that the Ramblers or Community Payback team can complete.

The Coleford Angels

The Coleford Angels have officially stood down, having done an enormous job for our community over the past 5 months. The Parish Council are extremely grateful to each of the Angels for the effort that they have put in to help support the vulnerable and isolated parishioners at this difficult time.



Plans for future 'in person' Parish Council meetings

The Parish Council has agreed that the September meeting will take place virtually using Zoom. It is hoped that @ The Hub will open its doors during September so at the next meeting we will consider whether to hold the October meeting @ The Hub.



Bus Survey

Mendip District Council has requested that the Parish Council completes a survey on behalf of the parishioners regarding the bus service in Coleford. Look out for further information on how you can contribute to this discussion. We will use the Parish notice boards, website and the Facebook page to consult with the village. If you would like to comment but do not have access to these methods then please call me on 07971 516916 or email on clerkcolefordsomerset@gmail.com Your feedback is essential!

Date of Next Meetings:

Wed 26th August 2020

Planning Meeting – Due to clashing with the MDC planning board this meeting will be cancelled
Parish Council meeting

Wed 9th September 2020



If you have any issues that you would like to bring to the Parish Council's attention please contact the Clerk on 01749 880428 or email clerkcolefordsomerset@gmail.com
Check out the website www.colefordsomerset.info

Philip Ham, Chairman

Somerset County Council and Mendip District Council Reports

Somerset County Councillor report

County Cllr Philip Ham had circulated a press release from Somerset County Council which outlined that the District Councils had done a U-turn regarding unitary. The Somerset's District Councils have now agreed to work towards a plan to abolish themselves and create two new unitary authorities across Somerset. Talks will now take place between the District Councils and Somerset County Council to discuss the best option for Somerset.



Corona Virus Update: Whilst every death is undoubtedly an absolute tragedy, the situation in Somerset has been throughout the pandemic relatively quiet compared to the rest of the Country. As at 30th July, the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 1308 and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 201. There have been no further Care Home deaths since 3rd July and the current number of total deaths across the County is currently 12% below the 5-year average. The latest R value for Somerset is between 0.8 and 1.1.

Covid 19 Outbreak Management: The Local Outbreak Engagement Board has met for the first time and agreed the Local Outbreak Management Plan. This Board will oversee the public engagement should any local lockdown actions be required. The Government has also passed down powers to the local authority to close premises, restrict open spaces and ban events in instances where the number of infections begins to rise sharply.

Covid 19 Business Survey: Somerset are undertaking a business survey to assess the impacts of COVID-19 (coronavirus) on the economy and will provide vital intelligence to help support local business response and recovery work. This survey forms part of a package of intelligence gathering being undertaken on the business and labour market impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, working in partnership with business leaders and stakeholders across the county. The survey can be accessed online at www.somerset.gov.uk/businessrecoverysurvey until 14th August. Businesses can be reassured that their data will not be shared and all responses will be completely anonymised.

One Somerset: The business case to move to a Single Unitary authority across Somerset is available on www.onesomerset.org.uk and details the reasons for the recommendations and the substantial benefits to the residents of Somerset. The business case was approved by Full Council on the 29th July for submission to the Secretary of State. Engagement and consultation activities on One Somerset will continue through the later summer and autumn.

AV1 Learning Robots: Somerset County Council's trail-blazing use of robot technology, to help poorly children learn, is in line for a top national award. In the biggest initiative of its kind in the country, the Council invested in 50 AV1 robots to support children who can't be in school – whether it's because they are sick or overcoming physical or mental health challenges. Now the project has been shortlisted in the Digital Transformation category of the national MJ Awards 2020. The winner is due to be announced in early October.

Since being introduced late last year, 45 schools have already asked to use a robot to support children who cannot physically be in the classroom, including through the Covid-19 crisis. SCC expects that in the new school year students who are still required to shield due to the Covid-19 situation will benefit hugely from the AV1 Robot scheme.

Library Services: The County's Library service now allows people to use an online request form to receive a selection of up to 10 books, DVDs or Talking Books which staff pick out for customers, based on the types of authors or genres that are of interest to them. The service originally operated from Taunton, Frome, Yeovil, Minehead and Bridgwater libraries and has had nearly 900 order and collect requests. From the 27th July, this was extended to Wells, Dulverton and Ilminster and from the 3rd August, Burnham-on-Sea, Williton, Wincanton and

Shepton Mallet. South Petherton Community Library will be doing the same from the 4th August. Computers in the libraries need to be pre-booked and are available for one-hour slots, with time built in for cleaning.

To date over 520 sessions have been booked. All current loans that would have been due back during the lockdown period have been extended to the end of August, and any overdue charges have been waived.

Domestic Abuse Service: Somerset County Council' domestic abuse service is to receive a share of a half million-pound fund to support local services. The Council's service provider, The You Trust, is one of a number of local agencies who help victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, which will benefit from the fund. The You Trust are often the first point of contact for someone who is seeking help and the recent lockdown had a significant impact on victims who were living with perpetrators and felt that there was no way to escape. Help is available – 0800 69 49 999 or www.somersetsurvivors.org.uk

Maternity Toolkit: The newly launched Somerset Maternity Toolkit developed by Somerset County Council and the wider Local Maternity System offers a digital guide designed to support the beginning and early part of the maternity and parenting journey. It then leads supportively onto the Parent Carer Toolkit for parents/carers of school age children and young people. The service can be accessed 24/7 from home or on a smartphone on https://cypsomersethealth.org/maternity_toolkit

Mendip District Councillors report



District Cllr Ham reported as follows:

Scrutiny. This month last year's accounts we scrutinised which showed an overspend of £45k, but £15 million underspend on investments which would have given a return to help balance this year's accounts, this could be a costly mistake in the years ahead, not to mention the cost of Covid 19.

They also studied the performance report January to March which showed a big increase in days lost to sickness, but when questioned if this was due to Covid 19 the answer was NO but more stress related. Many items also had not completed due to the pandemic hitting the last month of the quarter,

It has been agreed to spend £60k on consultants regarding cycle ways and footpaths.

It has been agreed to spend £50k a year on a trial of hoeing weeds in one town and one village as a trial rather than using glyphosate at a cost of approx. £200 plus application cost £1000 max.

Gladman was discussed as an agenda item, however Cllr Ham wished to thank Cllr Townsend for all his hard work on this on behalf of the Parish Council as he was aware of how hard he has been working on defending Coleford against this planning application.

The emptying of green waste bins, stickers and which day collections take place has caused numerous complaints and questions.

The Eagle Inn continue to challenge MDC, District Cllrs Ham and Townsend, and the Parish Council on the Asset of Community Value they had imposed on them, we believe we have done nothing other than that expected of Councillors on behalf of the parish.

The Hub will reopen as soon as possible in September, the date will be discussed next week.

District Cllr Townsend reported as follows:

Mendip Full Council meeting 20-7-20

The Leader Ros Wyke gave a report on their first year in power, covering:

- Mendip is changing to become fairer, greener, more open and more transparent
- All but one rough sleeper has been found accommodation
- Over £30m in grants to local businesses has been given from central government funds
- They are committed to Saxonvale
- The reopening of Shepton Mallet train station
- Acting 'at pace' to create social housing

The Conservative Leader Tom Killen questioned:

- Why no meeting of the Phoenix Board since December 2019 to address commercial investment opportunities to secure the vital income stream for the Council?
- There is no evidence of a Recovery Plan or an Economic Strategy
- There is concern that the Saxonvale planning application is still not decided some 18 months after submission
- There appears to be no Car Parking or Gypsy and Traveller strategy

Shane Collins the Green Leader stressed that COVID 19 had reinforced the need to source food locally

The new Section 151 (Chief Finance) Officer was announced as Mr Richard Bates. Following the loss of Donna Nolan, 2 of the Council's 3 first line officers have left this year.

Mendip Planning Board 22-7-20

Two significant developments were approved:

- Frome, Sandys Lane behind McDonalds – 235 houses plus retail
- Nunney, behind the wagon park at Nunney Catch – 80 houses.

These will make a major contribution to Mendip's housing target, and secondly both sites were included within the Emerging Local Plan Part 2. This is not the case for the Gladman application in Coleford, for which the planning officer has yet to report, although we are told it will be on the agenda at the August Planning Board.

Mendip Cabinet 3-8-20

The Finance report stated that a balanced budget was in place. This is an unsubstantiated statement to make until the effects of COVID 19 costs are fully understood. A Capital underspend of £15M for 19/20 was reported. This reflects the delay in making the property purchases that are essential for the Council to achieve its Revenue requirements. There appears to be no new Commercial Strategy to take account of the new environment.

One Somerset – Member Briefing 11-8-20

Mendip's Leader, Ros Wyke, yesterday announced that the four Districts in Somerset had abandoned the idea of them working more closely but had been persuaded that Unitary was the way forward. Their proposal is now that there should be two Unitaries in the county – East Somerset comprising Mendip and South Somerset, and West Somerset including Sedgemoor and Taunton and West. The Business Case is being prepared. The plan is still for a decision in early spring 2021, Shadow Authorities to be set up in April 21 with elections and the full body in place by April/May 22. Consultation is proposed but with no detail of the method and timescales.