

# Parish Council of Coleford

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## Newsletter for March 2018

### Closure of the Post Office

The news that the Post Office would be closing on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March was hugely disappointing. There is much confusion surrounding the closure and members of the public are very concerned. The Parish Council is committed to helping to find a resolution and is working closely with all parties.

### Coleford Litter Pick

Despite the poor weather, 8 adults and 3 youngsters came along to the litter pick. The team worked in two groups, one clearing the Highbury PF, hard court, play area and car park, and the other group working across Beacon View, the open spaces there and the footpath from Anchor Road to Bishop Henderson School. The haul from Highbury PF was less than previously, probably due to the litter picks completed by the Community pay-back team. A dozen bags of litter were collected and everyone was pleased with the result and was positive about future events. The Parish Council would like to thank those that gave up their time to help give Coleford a tidy up.

### PCSO

During February there were 15 logs were created due to various calls from the village of Coleford. These calls cover numerous matters from ASB, road related, RTC, suspicious sightings and enquiries. Coleford received 2 calls for ASB, 1 theft of a vehicle, thankfully located and no damage to the vehicle occurred.

### County Council Report

County Cllr Ham reported:

Finance - The budget has been set for the coming financial year with the Council tax increase coming in at 2.99% plus Adult social care at 3.00%, Somerset Rivers Authority is 1.5% of the total (no increase)

Ofsted report into SCC Children's Services - Following the recent Ofsted rating of 'Requires improvement to be good' the 7 point improvement programme for children's services is now being updated and amended to reflect the recommendations which will clearly set out the milestones required to reach 'Good'.

Family Support Service - The decision to deliver SCC's new Family Support Service have now been formally made. The aim is to develop integrated Family Support Services with the vital Health Visiting service (already commissioned by SCC) being brought in house next year. As a result SCC are working to ensure services are provided where they are needed when they are needed, concentrating money on frontline staff and not on buildings. Communities will also be supported by SCC to be more resilient and develop further voluntary activity. Further info is available from [publichealth@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:publichealth@somerset.gov.uk)

Secondary School Admissions - 97.5% of children have been offered a place at one of their top three school preferences, a slight increase on last year's figures of 97.17%. In total 93.5% received their 1<sup>st</sup> preference, an increase on last year's figures of 92.32%

Single Use Plastics - At the Full Council meeting in late February the County Council unanimously agreed to begin work to move towards the withdrawal of all single use plastics across all of its site. Separately, Somerset Waste Partnership are well placed to inform the public conversation around the plastic waste. They are already engaging through social media, local media and through 'Schools against waste' programme about the impact of plastic, particularly considering recent regulatory changes in China.

Somerset Rivers Authority - Discussions have continued with Defra officials in respect of the SRA being a self-precepting body; officials of the SRA have also met with Dr Therese Coffey (Environment Minister) where the Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to introducing legislation. This is likely to be through a Private Members Bill and the next step details are expected soon.

National College for Nuclear - The NCN which opened on the 7<sup>th</sup> February is now providing state of the art nuclear training facility, including a virtual reality environment, a reactor simulator, computer equipped training rooms, recreation and collaboration space, sports facilities and student accommodation. Bridgwater and Taunton College are the principle delivery agency, supported by their Energy Skills and Advance Engineering centres.

Libraries Consultation - The Libraries consultation continues and recent community engagement events have been well attended. It is important that as many people are encouraged to engage with the consultation as possible to provide comprehensive feedback from those who may be affected by any potential changes in the service. No decisions will be taken until the results of the consultation have been fully analysed. The consultation runs until the 22<sup>nd</sup> April - further details can be found at <http://somersetlibraries.co.uk/consultation/>

Somerset Registration Service - Somerset Registration Service, which is used by 3000 couples per year, have launched a new website to support couples planning a wedding or civil partnership in Somerset. The website [www.somersertweddingservice.org.uk](http://www.somersertweddingservice.org.uk) features 115 venues currently licensed for ceremonies, as well as a supplier directory of local wedding industry professionals and a comprehensive guide to Somerset ceremonies.

Volunteer Drivers - SCC needs more volunteer drivers across the county to help people get to medical appointments, day care centres, schools etc Drivers need to be over 18, have a four door car, a current driving licence and commit to as little as 1 hour a week. Mileage expenses will be reimbursed at up to 50p per mile. For more information [www.somersetvolunteer.co.uk](http://www.somersetvolunteer.co.uk)

Volunteering - Spark [www.sparksomerset.org.uk](http://www.sparksomerset.org.uk) and Engage [www.engagews.org.uk](http://www.engagews.org.uk) can help local voluntary sector organisations looking for volunteers as well as individuals looking for opportunities. There is also a wide range of volunteering opportunities across Somerset on the national volunteer database [www.do-it.org](http://www.do-it.org)

Home from Hospital sooner - Home First is a SCC's highly acclaimed health and social care initiative which frees up hospital beds. Although the numbers of people being admitted to hospital has increased significantly, the number of people facing unnecessary delays in leaving hospital has reduced by an impressive 60% compared to the same time as last year. As soon as someone no longer needs medical support in hospital, Home First allows them to leave hospital rather than waiting on the ward for care assessments and rehabilitation planning.

Fostering and Adoption - SCC are launching a design poster competition for uniformed organisations across Somerset (Guides, brownies, rainbows, scouts cubs beavers etc) to help us promote an urgent push for foster carer recruitment in Foster Care Fortnight. The winner will receive £250 voucher to spend on outdoor equipment and their design will be used as a fostering poster/online/in social media. Further details from Caroline Cook on [CZCook@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:CZCook@somerset.gov.uk)

## **District Council Reports**

District Cllr Ham reported that: the Council tax increase of 3.4% (£5 increase)

All is being done by the Parish Council regarding the closure of the Post Office, firstly on a temporary basis and then permanently. This is a commercial decision between the operating parties. As a last resort the Hub have offered its premises for use as a Post Office.

District Cllr Townsend reported:

PLANNING BOARD - Much of my time was spent on this, involving visits to sites at Wells, Priddy, Yarley, Coxley, Pilton, and of course Coleford and Holcombe.

- The Crossways Garage application was discussed at length with concerns over highways, security, opening hours and location of the house. The Board concluded there were no material planning reasons to refuse the application, noting that anecdotal concerns over highways for example had to be backed by professional opinion to carry any weight against Somerset Highways official view. The agent was required to produce a Transport Plan which is under consideration. Cllr Townsend has also written to the agent to ask them to reconsider the closing time of 23-00 and the outside siting of the ATM. He also asked them to consider including a Post Office within the store in the light of subsequent developments.

- 8 Stones Paddock, Holcombe - despite representations from the Parish and Ward Councillors, the Board decided that objections relating to overbearing/loss of light and inappropriate porch development were not sufficiently strong material conditions to justify refusal.

FULL COUNCIL - The Mendip Council Tax increase was confirmed at 3.41%. The Somerset County rate was still awaited at the time. There was concern that we are paying a levy to the Somerset Rivers Authority - the Chairman was able to point to a number of projects in the Mendip area that are being funded, noting too that much of the rain that goes to the Levels falls on the Mendips. Overall our 2017/18 Year End outturn was expected to be within £10k of budget, with the previous forecast overspend of c£700k eliminated through strict management control without affecting services.

CABINET - Cabinet approved the Somerset Homeless Review and Strategy, which has been produced to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. It was noted that in Mendip there were 3580 households on Homefinder Somerset in 2012, this had reduced to 1391 in 2016. Also, at the start of the recent snowfall all known rough sleepers in the District were approached by Mendip Housing and not a single one accepted the help offered.

### **Progress report on BMX pump track**

Despite the snow the work on the track progressed on schedule and was completed within the 3 weeks. The result is amazing! The children and youths of Coleford and the surrounding area have an outstanding track which will be suitable for all users. The Parish Council would like to thank everyone who has contributed in some way to make this happen. There are too many to name in this article but we will ensure that all that have helped will be acknowledged and invited to an official opening later in the year.

The final phase will be to complete the landscaping which will help the track to blend with the playing field.

### **Highways**

#### Part 1 with Graham in the absence of Charlie Higgins

Charmborough Lane - Repair work is now marked up prior to Surface Dressing. Cllr Townsend stressed the importance of repairing right up to the edges to ensure the maximum width of road is covered. It was confirmed that access will be available during the works for the houses on Charmborough Lane.

Anchor Rd - repairs at Lipyeate Cross and by the 30 sign now marked up

Repair Quality - Cllr Townsend expressed concern that recent repairs, eg between the Royal British Legion and Post Office, were rapidly failing. Somerset Highways noted this was often a result of the contractor using a whacker plate rather than roller - any photographic evidence we can produce would be helpful. This particular repair also requires work from Wessex Water.

Pharmacy - Somerset Highways have already checked the pothole on Anchor Rd and it still fails to meet the repair criteria.

Cllr Townsend requested:

- Church Street - an update on the timing of the resurfacing
- Highbury St pavement - asked for an inspection of the section from Careys Mead to Church St for safety reasons.
- Brewery Lane - requested an inspection of the triangular covers on the north side of the road.
- Entrance by Co-op - asked for an update of the resurfacing of the pavement along to the shop entrance.
- Holcombe - asked for an inspection of potholes and flooding on Burrows Lane.

#### Part 2 with Chris Betty

Soho - Cllr Townsend voiced the concern expressed by residents that emerging from Coleford, Dores Hill, was very dangerous with limited visibility to the left in particular. Several near misses had been reported, including by Cllr Townsend. Concern had also been expressed at the Halecombe cross roads 100 yards to the South but this was being addressed through Leigh on Mendip Parish Council, including hedge removal. Cllr Townsend suggested at the least a SLOW sign could be painted on the road coming up from Vobster. Somerset Highways noted that this normally had to relate to a signed hazard, but agreed to do a site visit after our meeting to consider alternatives and advise his findings.

Small Improvement Schemes (SIS) - Cllr Townsend voiced the continuing concern about speeding at the Co-op junction and speeding/parking in the lower part of the village. These had been included in Cllr Ham's SIS proposal to Highways and Somerset Highways suggested we contact Kerry Jones there for an update.

### **Update on Housing Need Survey**

The results of the Housing Needs Survey (HNS) were published in the report dated 26-2-18 which had been circulated to all Councillors.

The 2011 Census shows a village population of 2313. 1060 questionnaires were sent out and 195 were returned. This is a response rate of 18.4% which Mendip consider to be reasonably strong.

In summary, 13 valid responses were received which identified a need for affordable housing, with renting from a Housing Agency as the preferred tenure. Just 1 of the 13 selected Older Persons Accommodation. There was a clear preference for 2 and 3 bedroom houses or bungalows.

The catch-all question inviting comments on other issues had responses relating to roads, traffic volume, infrastructure, public transport and employment opportunities. These were given a higher priority than housing development in many responses. You will remember this was included as a major caveat to our recent Local Plan Part II response.

Mendip Housing have offered to come and give us a further explanation and a Q and A session if we wish, provisionally booked for 11th April.

Cllr Townsend would like the Parish Council to thank Nina Richards and Roisin McDermott at Mendip Housing for organising this survey at no cost to the Parish Council and most important he wanted to record the thanks of the Parish Council to those who responded to the HNS Questionnaire and contributed to the future direction of the village.

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### **Date of Next Meetings:**

Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2018	Planning Meeting
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2018	Parish Council Meeting

As of April ALL future meetings will be held @ The Hub, Church Street and ALL meetings will be held on Wednesday nights rather than in the past when the planning meeting has been held on a Tuesday. The meeting dates are available on the Parish website. [www.colefordsomerset.info](http://www.colefordsomerset.info)

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](mailto:clerkcolefordsomerset@gmail.com)  
Please check out the website [www.colefordsomerset.info](http://www.colefordsomerset.info)

*Philip Ham, Chairman*