

# Parish Council of Coleford

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## Newsletter for March 2020

### PCSO report

The latest neighbourhood Crime statistics / recorded crime for Coleford from 1<sup>st</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> February are as follows:



- Residential burglaries - 1
- Non dwelling Burglaries – 0
- Attempted Burglaries - 0
- Criminal Damage – 1
- Theft from a Motor Vehicle – 0
- Theft - 0
- ASB – 1

### Update on the proposed Gladman Application at Lipyeate

Despite best efforts there have been no updates from the Planning Officer regarding the proposed application. The parish Council will continue to press for an update and if needed escalate the requests to the planning officers manager.

### Present applications

2019/3016/FUL - The Eagle Inn Highbury Street, Coleford, Radstock, BA3 5NT. Change of Use and conversion of public house to 6 flats - Use Class (C3). Revised drawings and statements received 24/02/20)

The agent attended the meeting and explained that the revised plans included some changes to an entrance and windows along with the number of parking bays being reduced from 12 to 8 to allow for more landscaping to the front of the property which MDC planning department had flagged up as desirable. The new number of parking spaces are in line with the Planning requirements. He also explained that an economic viability statement had been supplied showing that a loss has been made over recent years. There is limited floor space and with the small amount of parking it would be difficult to make it work as a restaurant. Councillors asked various questions which were answered by the agent. The Parish Council voted that the application be recommended for refusal on the same grounds as the original application, namely that the concerns over the road safety are still an issue.



### Highways and Footpaths including

A site visit was held on 5th March with Sara Davis of Somerset Highways Traffic Management, Mendip East to discuss Newbury/Dark Lane. It was noted that there is already an Unsuitable for HGVs sign at the crossroads outside the Works which should prevent vehicles turning right into Dark Lane. Driving along Dark Lane the narrowness of the Lane was obvious, but noted the drops off road at the bottom of the two dips. The Unsuitable for HGVs sign buried in the hedge opposite Luckington Manor Farm is clearly a waste of time and Sara is looking to put a new sign at Luckington Cross to stop HGVs entering the Lane. As Sara is now responsible for East Mendip area District Cllr Townsend took advantage of her visit to show her again the issues along Charmborough Lane. There may be scope for coordinating a weight limit with the restrictions being planned for Holcombe.

Other items raised with Somerset Highways:



- Stockhill - potholes by the 30mph sign
- Charmborough Lane - multiple edge erosions reported
- Brewery Lane - damage around two drains
- Common Lane - two potholes
- High St - blocked drains reminder

## VE Day 75

A leaflet has been printed which shows all the events that will be taking place over the weekend which is in the process of being delivered to each house within Coleford and Holcombe.

### Date of Next Meetings:

Wed 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Planning Meeting

Wed 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Parish Council meeting

**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)  
Check out the website [www.colefordsomerset.info](http://www.colefordsomerset.info)**

*Philip Ham, Chairman*

## County & District Reports

**Somerset County Council Report:** County Cllr Ham provided the following Somerset briefing report.

**SCC Budget:** SCC Councillors have approved a £338m budget for its services with robust financial plans in place across the next three years. No cuts to frontline services are planned and the Council has improved its financial resilience by increasing its levels of reserves. The ambitious budget included:

- £1.5m to be spent installing 20mph advisory zones outside around half of all Somerset's schools with the remainder to follow in 2021.
- £133.5m to fund infrastructure projects, including new schools and school expansions, as well as highways and engineering.
- a significant £6.3m investment into social care providers to help fund the increased national minimum wage for care staff, as well as ensuring high quality provision
- £4.5m to introduce a Family Safeguarding model to better protect vulnerable Children in the County.
- £2m to provide better access to bus services for residents living in rural areas including three new Slinky buses, a further nine peak time bus services and faster, more direct services from West Somerset to colleges in Taunton.
- An undertaking to maintain the authority's General Fund reserves, vital to financial stability, at the projected end-of-year figure of £19.69m across 21/22 and 22/23.

The budget plans will see more than £775 million spent on services in the coming year and a 1.99% increase in the County Council's element of the Council Tax. The government allows a further 2% increase for Councils to provide Adult Social Care.

**Climate Change Fund for Towns and Parishes:** A massive £1m climate change fund has been created by SCC –the biggest single investment of its kind in the country. The £1m pot will be available for parish and town councils to bid for green initiatives in their own patch as SCC acts on its decision to sign the national Climate Change Emergency Declaration which aims to make Somerset carbon neutral by 2030 – with a commitment to find significantly more funding in the following years. More details will be published in the next few months with clear guidelines and governance.

**Covid-19:** Every winter our SCC's Public Health and care professionals gear up for a busy winter in preparation for flu and norovirus, and now there's a new virus – Coronavirus (or officially COVID-19). There are no positive COVID-19 cases in the South West, but SCC's health and care services are well prepared with well-rehearsed plans in place to deal with any potential outbreaks. Covid-19 is believed to be spread from person to person through cough droplets. Simple basic hygiene measures can help prevent its spread. This includes washing your hands regularly with soap and water and using a tissue when sneezing or coughing and throwing it away – the familiar 'catch it, bin it, kill it'. Without a tissue, then use the crook of your arm rather than your hand. For the latest information, advice and guidance, check out [www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public)

**One Somerset:** Following his announcement in January, Somerset County Council Leader David Fothergill has now formally written to Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, kick starting the case for One Somerset – A Unitary Council for Somerset. This follows an independent report commissioned by SCC and all four District councils which was published earlier this year and outlines clear benefits of switching to unitary. It is expected that around £25 million every year can be made available to reinvest and improve vital services by cutting waste and reducing duplication.

**Brain in Hand:** A digital helping hand is about to be trailed in Somerset to provide tailored support for people with mental health issues or learning disabilities. Brain in Hand is an app that links the user with their carers and support teams. It provides people with their own specific ways to cope, with extra help on tap when needed. The app aims to increase a user's independence by providing them with ways to manage their everyday life and negotiate a path that's safe for them. It can give prompts and reminders and links to verbal responders or people's own circle of support, who can intervene when asked, offering reassurance and the help needed to get back on track.

**Children's Mental Health:** Somerset County Council is deploying two new teams to boost children's mental health as part of its programme of support for children and schools available in the county. The initiative which has won £400,000 in Government trailblazer funding through the Fit for my Future partnership sees the Teams working in the Taunton and Mendip areas offering direct support to children and young people with mild to moderate mental health issues. The County Council, in partnership with Somerset CCG is now bidding for Government money to fund a wider roll-out of teams in Somerset. A decision is expected by September this year.

**Utility Company prosecutions:** Two utility firms have received significant fines after pleading guilty to roadwork's offences. Somerset County Council brought action against Verizon UK Ltd and Western Power Distribution as part of its commitment to unauthorized disruption and keeping the public safe. Verizon UK Ltd pleaded guilty to one offence relating to unauthorized roadwork's that led to substantial disruption on Taunton Road, Bridgwater and were fined £30,000 with £1,841 in costs. Western Power Distribution pleaded guilty to one offence relating to works in Kingstone, Ilminster which posed a real risk to the safety of the public and site operatives. They were fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £1,730 in costs.

**Connecting Devon and Somerset:** CDS has launched a fresh procurement to find new contractors to roll-out superfast broadband across the two counties. Working closely with Building Digital UK (BDUK) agency it follows confirmation of the Government's funding extension for the programme– helping to provide a £38 million public investment in the region's broadband.

**Mendip District Council Report:** District Cllr Ham and District Cllr Townsend gave the joint report. The main issues from the Full Council Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February were:

**Council Tax** – It was agreed that the Mendip DC element will increase by £5 a year for the average Band D taxpayer. This is exactly the same sum as last year's increase and is the maximum sum allowed without a referendum. However when this was submitted to Central Government for endorsement it was discovered that one element, the Special Expenses Rate, thought to be an allowable exclusion from the calculation, had in fact to be included, which then meant the referendum threshold was exceeded. As a result an Emergency Full Council Meeting was called for Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> which agreed a new lower increase excluding the Special Expenses in time for the new demands to be posted out.

**Capital Strategy** – The previous administration had agreed a limit of £80 million for borrowings from the Public Works Loan Board for commercial investment to raise income to make up for the shortfall caused by the reduction in funding from central government. Council were asked to approve an increase to £160M of which £50M would be for regeneration projects in the District. Concern was registered that the £50M must be soundly invested in solid assets that will provide a reasonable return.

**Corporate Plan** – The new Plan was formally launched. Its stated key Aim is “To build a fairer, greener and more vibrant Mendip that values our distinctive towns and rural communities”.

**Climate Emergency** – The public presentation on the County led programme for carbon neutrality by 2030 was held at Mendip on 15<sup>th</sup> February. Many questions arose, including the assertion that farming contributed a third of the greenhouse gasses in the county, and why was the carbon free electricity produced by Hinkley B not included in the equation? We were encouraged by Council to use green energy suppliers and promote tree and hedge planting. Involvement of Parish Councils will be promoted. Also measures to discourage car parking with engine idling are being pursued, particularly near schools.

**Council Restructuring** – In addition to the County led Unitary structure, Mendip wanted to look at the savings that could accrue simply from the 4 Districts working even more closely together. Council were persuaded that other options should also be explored including for example a relationship with BANES as Frome is clearly looking towards Bath rather than Taunton. There was much suspicion about the reality of the projected savings.

**Anti-Semitism** – We have been asked by Central Government to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition and include the principles in its way of working. Councillors were happy with the principle but without negating it in any way were concerned that to do so would put Anti-Semitism on a different plane from other forms of discrimination and voted to action the Equalities Board to review it in a wider context.

**Somerset Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy** - At the Cabinet Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March a new Somerset Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy was agreed. This is the work carried out locally by Mendip's Housing Options Team working with other agencies such as the YMCA. In 2020/21 MDC have secured Central Government funding of over £400,000 to support this work. Special emphasis is placed on early intervention and supporting the young, and ex-service veterans. The Mendip rough sleeper count for one night in the Autumn of 2019 was 13, the lowest level for at least 8 years.

**Parish Workshop** - Cllr Townsend attended the recent Parish Workshop at MDC. It highlighted areas of concern which was then honed down to 4 key areas, namely Community & Planning, IT, Natural environment and transport. 4 working groups will be held to further discuss each area in more detail.