

The Annual Report of Colwall Parish Council 2017-2018



Chairman's Report

Committee reports demonstrate that this has been another busy year for the parish council, and we can be proud of what has been achieved.

Of the two most visible milestones of which the Parish Council can be proud, the first is almost a literal milestone: Colwall Henge. The climbing stone seems to have been gratefully accepted as part of the village furniture. It is gratifying to see it so well used, and a vindication of some careful thought and consultation by the council's play equipment working group. The second is the school. While delivery lay with Herefordshire Council and its contractors, the Parish Council was on hand throughout the process to negotiate small improvements on details such as access and highways changes. Credit to the councillors involved.

But our achievements also include less visible work that will also have an impact for years to come. Getting the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan for Herefordshire's largest village to Regulation 14 consultation stage has been no mean achievement for the NDP working group, and sets us fair for hopefully getting the plan 'made' by next year. Equally assiduously, the Library working group has risen to the challenge of shaping a sustainable solution for managing the library and the building it occupies, and this too sets us fair for future negotiations with Herefordshire Council.

The council's work continues to be supported by our highly capable and efficient clerk, Karen Davis, and through the dedication of the committees and their working groups. Huge thanks to the chairmen of these committees—Nicky Carless on Planning, Phil Kendrick on Village Amenities, and Gwyneth Rees on Finance and General Purposes—as well as to the leaders and participants of the working parties. Particular thanks to John Stock for indefatigable work on the NDP, to the Library Working Group for real commitment in developing a robust and sustainable solution for managing the Library, to Paul Butler and his band of volunteers for keeping their eyes on the miles of footpaths that I suspect we all take for granted, and to the councillors who, week in, week out, conduct site visits and appraisals for every single planning application that is made in the village. The council would not function without your commitment.

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report

This has been another satisfactory year financially. There was an overall surplus of £6,657 against a budgeted deficit of £5,029.; a positive difference for the year of £11,686.

The most notable variations against budget were:-

- Neighbourhood Development Plan costs were £6,625 under budget, thanks to a grant to contribute towards the professional consultancy costs and some of the expenditure being deferred, to the forthcoming year, pending completion of the Plan ,

- General, Recreation area & Play area Village Amenities expense was underspent by £4,340; of this General Maintenance was underspent by £390, grass cutting was under budget by £490, the Railway Garden expenditure was under budget by £215, there was very little Play Equipment Maintenance producing a saving over budget of £830, Village Amenities Special project was under budget by £732.

- General Administration came in on budget.

- There were minimal consultancy costs; saving £203

- There were no legal fees, giving a saving of £400.

- Insurance came in under budget by £207.

- Grants and Donations were £952 over budget, after a donation to the Malvern Hills ANOB of £750 (which had not been budgeted for).

Neighbourhood Development Plan - The net cost of the Neighbourhood Development Plan this year was £2,375 (against a budgeted £9,000) due to securing grant funding and some costs being deferred due to unforeseen delays in completion of the Plan.

Total net cost to date, £19,633.

Finally turning to the reserves, the allocated reserve funds of the Parish Council are comfortably adequate and the General Reserve at the end of fiscal 2017/18 stands at £50,976.

In all, it was another successful and satisfying year financially.

Thanks go to all my fellow councillors for their appreciation of our finances and for the good sense and restraint with which they have committed our community's money. My thanks also go to our Parish Clerk for her stewardship of the accounts and the timely and accurate production of information that has enabled us to make informed and positive decisions.

Gwyneth Rees-Chairman F & GP Committee

Planning and Development Committee Report

Over the last 12 months the Planning and Development committee have met on a regular basis to discuss planning applications. This year we have had 59 applications brought forward for consideration. These applications can range from small housing developments to house extensions to garden sheds to garages to tree preservation orders. The committee spent a lot of time discussing the housing development behind the Thai restaurant as well as applications being put forward for development behind the rectory.

Each application is studied by a member of the committee and often it is discussed with the applicant and their neighbours. The committee member will put together a report which is presented at committee so allowing all members to discuss the application and either raise objections or in fact have no objections. All applicants are considered against all relevant planning policies as well as using the guidance notes issued by the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

This all takes a lot of the committee members' time, so I would like to thank them all for their commitment in ensuring all applicants are examined in a very professional manner. It is important to note that Colwall Parish Council is only a consultee with decisions being made by Herefordshire Planning Officers and Planning Committee.

Nicky Carless – Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee

Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Party Report

In May 2017 meetings were held with Herefordshire Council Neighbourhood Development Plan and Planning staff to discuss issues regarding the density of housing being approved by Herefordshire Council; the balance between less dense development requiring more land, and the impact of Highways' views without their consideration of the bigger picture.

We had also received advice from a number of landowners who either now did not wish their land to go forward for development, or did not wish to develop within the timescale of the Plan. This meant we were no longer able to satisfy the housing target and a significant re-think on the development land was required.

In order to achieve the target it was agreed the Plan should be modified to include 16 houses on the land adjacent to the old school and 37 on the Grovesend site subject to agreement with the Highway Authority over the provision for pedestrians.

Following the Parish Council's strong objection to the planning permission for the development behind the Thai, the developer looked at providing 16 properties rather than 9. This however this was not taken forward, largely because of the change in S106 money that would be involved as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) has yet to be adopted in Herefordshire.

The Plan was therefore finalised and approved by the Parish Council to be submitted for Regulation 14 Consultation with 16 houses on and adjacent to the old school and 37 at Grovesend, including a specific requirement for facilities for cyclist and pedestrians to be provided.

As part of the Regulation 14 consultation a public meeting was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 31 January 2018 at which 198 people attended.

There has been a large response to the consultation with 97 responses being received via the Google Forms site, 54 via email and 15 by letter totalling 166, however some are duplicated across the different methods of response.

The representations amount to some 50,000 words and will take some time to consider.

As ever, my thanks go to all the Working Group members for their continued work on this task and particularly to Karen for her endless good advice and assistance.

John Stock- Lead, Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group

Village Amenities Committee Report

The Amenities Committee continues to oversee the regular workload around the village, meeting every 2 months, and prior to every meeting, members check on specific areas under their remit and report back to the Committee. This committee also undertakes the work of the previous countryside committee.

This Committee oversees the many areas in the village that provide recreational facilities and amenities. Play areas include Walwyn Meadow, Brookmill Close, Orlin Road, Allen's Meadow, and Colwall Green. Regular maintenance programmes include work on the War Memorial garden, surveying the trees in Walwyn Meadows, maintaining Aunt Alice and the pruning of the shrubs in Walwyn Meadows to ensure their health. The Parish Council also maintain the railway gardens which are an important gateway to the village for those visitors who arrive by train. During the winter the erection and maintenance of the Christmas tree and lights also falls under this committee.

The play equipment, War Memorial garden, village seats, notice boards and litter bins are regularly maintained to the usual high standard and all recreational areas have their grass cut fortnightly during the growing season by our chosen contractors. Thanks are due to our village butcher, D.T. Waller & Sons for the ongoing sponsorship of the work in the railway garden area and to Gwyneth Rees for her work overseeing the War Memorial garden.

Nature reserve. This remains in overall good order. There was an incident of vandalism early in the year; thankfully this has been an isolated incident.

The Orchard group have been granted permission to plant some local varieties of fruit trees in some of the public spaces across the village and we look forward to that, and the subsequent display of blossom.

Throughout 2017/18 there have been steady ongoing improvements to the play equipment. The Swing installation in Orlin Road has been replaced. A seesaw has been reinstated on Colwall Green and the most ambitious was a climbing rock, installed in Walwyn Meadow. Feedback has been very positive, particularly in relation to the climbing rock. Thanks go to Paul Butler for leading the group that developed this work and to Gwyneth Rees for her work in administering the process. These works have been funded by grant monies obtained by the Parish Clerk, Karen Davis.

A further development this year has been the additional number of volunteers that are walking the footpaths and reporting back any remedial work required. This eyes and ears role is fundamental to keeping on top of a network of approximately 50km of footpaths. The volunteers may bump into dog walkers, thus informally extending and updating the latest information; thus blocked footpaths, broken stiles and gates have been identified, reported and fixed, much more quickly than the

Footpath Officer could manage alone. Thanks to the volunteers who are giving their time and supporting the parish so positively.

Thanks must be given to all the councillors and co-opted members of the committee, our contractors and the Parish Clerk, Karen Davis for her guidance and support.

Phil Kendrick

Chairman of Village Amenities Committee