

## COLWALL PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting duly convened and held at the Colwall Village Hall, Mill Lane, Colwall on Wednesday 6th May 2015 at 7.30pm.****1. Welcome and apologies for absence.**

The Vice-Chairman, Mr John Mills welcomed approximately 5 members of the Public and 5 members of the Parish Council and The Clerk.

Apologies were received from Councillors Abbotts, Ashton, Carless, Haynes, Milne, Morris, Trafford-Roberts and Turner.

**2. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 7th May 2014 were agreed and signed by the Vice-Chairman as a correct record of the proceedings.

**3. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

There were no outstanding matters from the previous minutes.

**4. Annual Reports from the Parish Council.****Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.**

Councillor John Mills advised the meeting that 2014/15 was another satisfactory financial year with performance comfortably within expectations.

The Income and Expenditure statement shows a surplus of £1,435. This compares with an underlying surplus of £5,049 last year.

The significant changes over expenditure in 2014/15 were:

- A additional £16,000 supplement to the precept to support the continuing opening of the Library,
- £11,042 on support for the Library – raised through the precept,
- £4,273 for repair of play equipment at Orlin Road play area – shown in overall Village Amenities. This represents a 50% prepayment on the repairs. The remaining 50% will be spent in the coming year on completion of repairs which are expected in May 2015. This cost will be financed from the allocated accumulated fund put aside specifically for such eventualities.
- £2,501 additional spent on the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) which covered a whole year's work against only half a year's work last year.
- A one-time donation to the AONB for their exceptional help with the NDP.

All the above was budgeted for except the play equipment repairs and the donation to the AONB which was covered effectively by the NDP budget. All other expenditure was much the same as the previous year.

What is not shown in the official accounts is a comparison with the working Budget. Each November a Budget is set to steer Council through the following financial year starting the next April. In spite of the major costs itemised above the Council's finances performed comfortably under budget as they have done for the last many years.

It should be noted that considerable expenditure will be incurred again in 2015/16 to complete the NDP but an adequate Budget has been agreed for this and suitable funds transferred to an allocated reserve for this purpose. A new allocated fund has been established to hold the unspent balance of the precept supplement raised to fund Council's share of the Library partnership costs. The other allocated reserve funds are comfortably adequate and the General Reserve at the end of fiscal 2014/15 stands at £40,384.

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

Thanks were extended to fellow councillors for their appreciation of the finances and for the good sense and restraint with which they have committed the community's money; to Alison Grimshaw, the Parish Councils internal auditor; and to Karen Davis the Parish Clerk for her stewardship of the accounts and the timely and accurate production of information which has enabled the committee to make informed and positive decisions.

### **Chairman of the Planning & Development Committee.**

The main responsibility of this committee is to consider local Planning and Development matters mainly in our capacity as a statutory consultee to Herefordshire Council planning authority. We also deal with strategic and local transportation issues. This group meets bi-monthly.

During the year 60 applications were considered of which 11 related to trees. The Council made comments on many applications but only formally objected to 3 building applications and 3 tree applications.

The 3 building applications the Council objected to were:

- New dwelling at Beacon View; the Council objected to this development because it lies outside the settlement boundary which the Council endeavours to protect. However the application was approved by Herefordshire Council because of the shortfall in housing land supply, its proximity to the settlement boundary, it is a developed site, it is at or near NPPF paragraph 55 standards, the proposed landscaping and the sustainability of the building.
- The proposed broiler houses at Chances Pitch which was withdrawn following significant opposition from a well organised group of local residents, the Malvern Hills AONB Unit and the Parish Council.
- Netherton Cottage – a two storey extension that did not appear to the Council to be in character with the existing dwelling and surroundings including the choice of materials and window shape and size.

The development at the old Bottling Plant has commenced which will provide 12 purpose designed dwellings for older residents, 15 other homes, a shop and a 45 bed nursing home.

The development of 12 new dwellings on Brookmill Close has been approved but is yet to commence.

Thanks were expressed for the hard work over the past year of all the members of the Committee, particularly those who carry out the majority of the application review and to our ever patient Parish Clerk for keeping us straight and looking after me when in the chair.

## Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Party

Councillor John Stock summarised the activities and output of this working party during the last 12 months.

- In April the Working Group met with a consultant with a view to taking professional assistance to write the plan. However we were not content with the proposal from the consultant and did not make an appointment.
- The Working Group met regularly between June and October to prepare the outline of the plan policies using the Cerne Valley and Cringleford Neighbourhood Plans as templates.
- Herefordshire Council carried out a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for the parish but without using our Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity assessment on the grounds of consistency; it is therefore unhelpful and worthless.
- Herefordshire supplied the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) baseline information which the Group reviewed and returned with comments. It will be sent to the statutory bodies as part of the consultation exercise.
- The Group met in November to consider possible changes to the Settlement Boundary, the number of dwellings that might be accommodated and the extent to which it did not meet the required development target. Arrangements began for the third public meeting to be held in January 2015.
- Site Assessments were completed for each possible change to the Settlement Boundary.
- The third public meeting was held on 14 January 2015 in the village hall at which approximately 75 members of the public attended. Representations were requested.
- Several responses were received by the closing date of 31<sup>st</sup> March, including a number of compliments and a significant representation about the Cowl Barn Lane area.
- Herefordshire reviewed the Group's attempt at writing the Plan policies which confirmed professional assistance was essential. Following advice, Louise Kirkup from the planning consulting firm Kirkwells has now been appointed to translate our wishes into robust policies.
- Our clerk successfully obtained a grant from central government for whole of the cost of the consultant.
- A request to reserve the land adjacent to the village hall for the school was received.
- Two meetings have been held with Louise Kirkup including a tour of the parish.
- The Core Strategy continues to be amended and delayed and, with Herefordshire Council's blessing, we now intend to continue regardless of the Core Strategy progress.
- The Post Examination changes to the Core Strategy have been reviewed but have minimal impact on Colwall and our Plan.
- Herefordshire have notified each parish of their development target which after some discussion differed from the Group's calculation by 1.

Thanks were extended go to all the Working Group members including our ‘webmistress’ Liz for their continued dedication on a process that is taking far longer than was originally thought. My thanks particularly go to the Clerk for her endless good advice and assistance.

### **Chairman of the Village Amenities Committee**

The Chairman reported that over the last year the Amenities Committee has continued to oversee the regular workload around the village. The committee meet every 2 months, and prior to every meeting, members check all the areas under their remit and report back to the Committee.

The Amenities Committee oversees the many areas in the village that provide recreational facilities and amenities. Play areas including Walwyn Meadow, Brookmill Close, Orlin Road, Allen’s Meadow, and Colwall Green. Regular maintenance programmes include surveying the trees in Walwyn Meadows, maintaining Aunt Alice and the pruning of the shrubs in Walwyn Meadows to ensure their health. We also maintain the Railway Gardens which are an important gateway to the Village for those visitors who arrive by train.

Thanks must be given to the ongoing sponsorship for this area by our village butcher, D.T.Waller & Sons, and our various Contractors who carry out the work.

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.

Our work load involved in our various departments is quite extensive and time-consuming and we also have to deal with unexpected events as they occur.

It is interesting to note that extra work has been attended to. The Zip Wire installation in the Orlin Road Recreational Area has been upgraded. After a survey earlier in the year work has commenced in the Nature Reserve.

This year saw the end of the Malvern Conservators Management regime for Colwall Green. After a lengthy meeting with the Conservators it was decided to allow the regime to continue for another 2 year although we expect a more active management and we will be monitoring the progress of the Cutting Schedule and Land Management.

Busy as we are, it is gratifying to see that our work has come within the allocation of the annual budget once again. Thanks were extended to all the councillors and co-opted members of the Committee for their hard work and last but not least to our hard-working Parish Clerk, Karen who keeps us on the straight and narrow.

The Vice-Chairman of the committee reported on the former Countryside Committee responsibilities

### **Charlie Ballard Reserve.**

The Nature Reserve continues to be used by many members of our community as well as walkers passing through the parish. The new management plan, as mentioned in my previous report, was put into place and work has now been completed. It involved clearing the ponds and removing some of the undergrowth, especially around the pond area, also pollarding some of the trees and removing saplings.

Our thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. King for their comprehensive survey of the flora and fauna within the reserve.

The site is checked regularly by Stephen Maund who attends to any repairs of fences, steps, seats and gates and keeps the paths through the reserve clear.

### **Footpaths.**

There have been no major problems with the footpaths. Our Locality Steward, who oversees the Public Rights Of Way in our area, had family problems during the year but now he is back in post and has already settled the CW52 problem and met up with our footpath Officer to discuss a proposed diversion.

One outstanding matter is the use of CW2 by horses, which is not permitted since it is not a bridleway. Horses cannot be led or ridden on a footpath - the offender(s) have yet to be identified.

Stephen Maund has continued to keep the footpaths clear including removing some fallen trees after the winter gales.

A Parish Walk did not take place this year instead some members of the Council joined me in an inspection of Charlie Ballard Reserve.

We are indebted to our landowners who keep the footpaths clear on their land and are happy to liaise with us.

### **Colwall Green**

The Malvern Hills Conservators replaced the white fencing leading up to the railway bridge. There was some upheaval on the Green during the period when the temporary school buildings were being erected.

Parking of cars around the Green continues to bring problems.

The grass cutting regime will continue to be under review.

Finally, The Committee thanks were extended to the co-opted members of the Committee whose help and advice we value and the landowners who keep the footpaths clear on their land and are happy to liaise with us.

Stephen Maund - our wonderful clearer of tracks and footpaths, installer of stiles and gates and who generally is able to fix things.

Finally Karen Davis, our Clerk, who is always efficient and supportive.

### **Chairman of the Council**

The Vice-Chairman read out the Chairmans report

As you read through the reports of the Committee Chairmen you will see how busy your Parish Council has been looking after the open spaces, play areas, footpaths as well as planning for the future of the Parish.

Unusually for a Parish Council we have financially supported a member of staff in our library during 2014/15. This partnership with Herefordshire Council Library services has been slow to take off as processes needed to be established. As a library user you should not have noticed any difference in the service as of 1 April 2014 which is what we wished to achieve. Moving forward though, at last our small group of hands-on volunteers are receiving training in the operation of the library with the aim of them manning the library one extra morning a week. This would be a great step in the right direction for the library service in Colwall.

This last 12 months has been the last of the current term of office and a few of our Councillors decided to retire and not stand for election. I would to personally thank John Morris, Barry Ashton, Michael Milne and Nick Abbotts for serving as Councillors for the last 4 years. Neil Bowring resigned due to other commitments this year and Mark Hughes is hoping to put his name forward for co-option to fill any vacancies. All Parish Councillors give their time voluntarily as they wish to serve their community; often having to make difficult decisions on subjects they have limited knowledge. Each Councillor needs to apply a lot of common sense to any situation as well as providing local feeling and feedback to statutory bodies during any consultation. The requirement of this first tier of local government to take on services for the community will continue as central government exercises further financial cuts on local government.

The Chairman thanked her Vice Chairman – John Mills. John primarily keeps his finger on our finances as well providing me with a ‘sounding board’ for any issues I am unsure about. I know he also supports Karen our clerk, and I was pleased that he has agreed to stand for re-election this May.

The committee Chairmen, as well as the Neighbourhood development team put in many hours outside committee in fulfilling their responsibilities. I truly believe that our Parish Council has worked together as a team during this last 4 years and I look forward to working with the new Council and its new Councillors during the coming 4 years.

Finally Thanks were extended to Karen our clerk who without her clear guidance and hard work, we would not achieve so much as a Council, thank you Karen.

## **5. Herefordshire Carers Support**

Bernard Disley Trustee and Jacqui Bremner, Director, Herefordshire Carers Support undertook a verbal presentation on matters relating to the work Herefordshire Carers Support have been doing in supporting the work of Councils and local organisations to identify and try and resolve some of the challenges facing unpaid family Carers.

Questions were raised about the scheme and Jacqui left promotional literature.

## **6. Parishioners Question Time.**

No specific questions were raised at this time, as questions has been raised and answered during the respective Chairmans presentations.

The meeting closed at .8.50 p.m.

Chairman..... Date.....