



The Annual Report of Colwall Parish Council 2015-2016

Chairman's Report

This has been the first year of a four year term of office for the Councillors of Colwall Parish Council and it has been great to see both familiar and new faces around the Council table. We have in fact made strides in the reduction of the average age of Council and it has been refreshing to receive views of the different generations.

We started the new term of office with some in house training for all Councillors provided by the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils. Regulations are always changing so it is important to ensure we operate in a correct manner. Recently we met outside of Council to discuss how the Council should evolve to reflect a more modern approach to the challenges of the 21st century and the changing face of Local Government. No doubt you will read more about these discussions in our future newsletters.

As usual in this report you will read the busy activities of the various committees, the Neighbourhood Development team as well as the various working parties. One working party is looking at Colwall Library and its place within the community; you will have received a questionnaire which I encourage you to complete. Colwall Parish Council continues to financially support a member of staff in our library, while a team of volunteers man the Library every Thursday morning. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them. The Parish Council sees the library as a valuable asset to the village but we understand that its role over the coming years needs to be relevant to the modern society.

It was with sadness that we learnt early this year that the Red Cross had withdrawn its support for the Red Cross Warden scheme; I know many of our residents found this an invaluable service and I would like to thank Lea for the dedication she showed in supporting them.

Going forward into 2016/17 I am sure the face of the village of Colwall will develop as the new Lime Tree Gardens development settles into its landscape, the village shop finds its new home and plans are finalised and building work starts on the new primary school for Colwall. We are fortunate to have a vibrant village set in a picturesque landscape; the challenge going forward is to achieve that balance.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for volunteering many hours of their time, my Vice Chairman – John Mills who is an excellent ‘sounding board’ and for Karen our Parish Clerk who provides clear guidance to ensure we continue to serve our community to the best of our ability.

Nicky Carless

Chairman of Colwall Parish Council

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report

This has been another satisfactory year financially. There was an overall surplus of £9,798. However, this was favourably inflated by an unbudgeted grant of £8,547 from Section 106 monies, for play equipment in the Parish. Removing the effect of this grant reduces the accounting surplus to £1,251. This compares with an underlying surplus last year of £1,435.

The significant changes in Income and Expenditure over last year were:

- Legal fees of £650. This was in association with a deed of variation to the existing the lease for the Post Office/Parish Office premises,
- Donations and grants from the Council were down by £1,200 returning to the normal level after and unusually generous year previously,
- £3,620 was spent this year on extensive work to the pond in the Nature Reserve that had been deferred from previous years. This accounts for the increase in Village Amenities expense of which the Nature Reserve is a part,
- There was an increase of £2,496 in cost of the Red Cross Warden Scheme. The cost this year returned to the budgeted level after a difficult year in 2014/15, when the Red Cross were unable to provide a continuous service due to recruitment problems ,
- Expenditure on the Neighbourhood Development Plan was down £2,369 thanks to procurement of a grant of £3,700 towards aspect of the work involved,
- There was also an unexpected grant of £1,000 from the Parochial Church Council for a new Interpretation Panel in the Nature Reserve.
- All other expenditure was much the same as the previous year.

Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

The net cost of the NDP this year was £3,943. Total net cost to date is £14,240. The budgeted cost for 2016/17 is £10,500 exclusive of any grants obtained. This should complete the project.

Reserves

Parishioners are reminded that the present precept contains £16,000 specifically for support of the Library. Library costs this year were £11,170. The balance of £4,830 has been added to the Library Fund. This fund holds the balance of underspent Library precept for future eventualities associated with the ongoing support of the Library. It now totals £9,787.

The other allocated reserve funds are comfortably adequate and the General Reserve at the financial year's end stands at £44,140.

Budget

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. Parishioners should be pleased to know that the Council's finances performed comfortably under budget as they have done for the last many years.

Precept Increase 2016/17

Parishioners will have noticed on their own Council Tax demands that the Parish Precept for 2016/17 shows an increase of 8.2% in spite of the total precept to the Council having been increased by only 2%, as agreed in the 2016/17 budget approved in December 2015. This is because social council tax relief that was previously funded by central government through Herefordshire Council has now been

withdrawn. This leaves parish precept payers to carry this burden. The actual total amount of the precept paid to the Parish Council, and collected by Herefordshire on its behalf, has not been altered.

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; to **Alison Grimshaw**, our internal auditor; and to **Karen Davis our Parish Clerk** for her stewardship of our accounts and the timely and accurate production of information which has enabled us to make informed and positive decisions.

John R. Mills,

Chairman, F. & G.P. Committee

Planning and Development Committee Report

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 twice monthly.

During the year 67 applications were considered of which 27 related to trees. The Council made comments on many applications but only formally objected to 4 building applications and 1 tree application.

The building applications the Council objected to were;

1. 4 Broiler Units at Chances Pitch – which was subsequently withdrawn.
2. Two storey extension at Malvern Cottage, Stowe Lane which was subsequently modified and approved
3. The demolition of a bungalow and replacement with two 4-bed homes at Two Elms, 5 Crescent Road.
4. The erection of a stable at The Stables Evendine lane because of its impact on the AONB.

The tree application was at the Downs School, where it was considered the damage allegedly caused by the tree, had in fact been caused by other factors.

I would like to express my thanks 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 reviews.

Thanks are also due to our ever patient Parish Clerk for keeping us straight and looking after me when in the chair.

John Stock

Chairman Planning & Development Committee

Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Party Report

We have been working with our consultant to prepare the draft Plan, in particular drafting the policies.

In July 2015 we were asked to 'Allocate' a site for the new school in the Plan which is quite a process and included an appraisal of options and sites against clearly identified criteria followed by consultation with the community.

Three sites appeared worthy of detailed consideration; the existing school site and adjacent land; the land adjacent to the village hall and the land behind Grovesend Farm.

In September the Inspector's Report into Herefordshire's Core Strategy was published and it was adopted by cabinet on 15 October and by the Full Council meeting on 16 October 2015.

A public meeting was held on 4 November 2015 at which the draft Plan and the allocation of a site for the new school was presented, including the landowners proposal for housing development adjacent to the village hall.

Over 100 people attended and a specific Questionnaire was developed for representations and was available at the meeting and on-line. 108 representations from individuals or households have been received totalling 38,000 words.

In January, the Consultation feedback was considered, and the Parish Council agreed the Allocation of the School Site on the land adjacent to the Village Hall in Mill Lane, together with a number of conditions.

Following this we met with our consultant to discuss the representations received and what changes should be incorporated into the Plan.

Finally we are involved with the highway proposals for the school and preparing the NDP Highways and Traffic background note as the two should align. Essentially it is traffic calming, but appropriate for a village in the AONB.

Significant issues remain with the school proposals which are currently being considered.

As ever, my thanks 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 Karen for her endless good advice and assistance.

John Stock

Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group

Village Amenities Committee Report

Last year was again another busy year for the Village Amenities committee.

We are responsible for overseeing 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 active management of the planting and 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 gardening and maintenance works.

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 to deal with unexpected events as they occur.

Last year we had to undertake essential repairs to the popular “Zip Wire” piece of play equipment in Orlin Road Play Area, as well as replacing the boundary fencing in the Recreational Area. Although this was initially paid for out of the Parish Council reserves, thanks to the ministrations of our Clerk Karen, we have been able to recuperate all the costs for the repair to the Zip Wire from grants.

The Committee was impressed by the efforts of Swansea Council in their initiative to assist pollinating insects and butterflies by allowing areas of grass verge to be put down to wild flowers. We have initiated a small program down at Colwall Green to install some pre-seeded mats. If this is a success we will be considering extending the scheme to other areas of the village.

Thanks are extended to Councillor Kendrick for arranging to the bus shelter to be repainted by the youth at WMYOS.

Busy as we are, it is gratifying to see that our work has come within the allocation of the annual budget once again. Thanks must be given to all the councillors and co-opted members of the Committee for their hard work, our Lengthsman Steven Maund for his good work over the year. Last but not least our thanks go to our hard-working Parish Clerk, Karen who keeps us on the straight and narrow

Jim Beard

Chairman of Village Amenities

Report on Countryside element of the Village Amenities Committee

Charlie Ballard Reserve

The site is checked regularly by Stephen Maund who attends to any repairs of fences and gates and also clears the pathway through the reserve. The next phase of the management plan has been completed with the main pool dredged and undergrowth close to the main pool removed. There has been clearance of the ephemeral pool and the removal of some trees within the reserve. A new interpretation board has been installed to inform visitors. The Nature Reserve continues to be used by many members of the community, especially the younger ones, as well as walkers.

Footpaths

Derek Rees resigned as footpath officer in August 2015. He thanked all the parish walkers who help with reporting any problems with gates, stiles and footpaths. The Committee thanked him for his work as Footpath Office. Since then a member of the Parish Council, Paul Butler, has taken over the position.

A Parish walk was organized for the Council, endeavoring to show the various types of footpaths within our parish. I devised a walk without stiles to encourage less able walkers, five members of the council attended.

Colwall Green

We have been in communication with the Malvern Hills Conservators and have now established the twice yearly cutting regime for Colwall Green. The Conservators are aware and are keeping a

watching brief of the encroachment onto the Green from cars parking along the road. The bus shelter at the Green has now been painted and cleaned and flower troughs will soon be in place, once planted a member of the Colwall Green community has offered to tend and water the plants. We are also preparing to plant a wild flower mat as an experiment in an endeavour to encourage wild flowers to grow on the vergers within the village.

Thanks

My thanks go to Stephen Maund who is always cheerful and clears our footpaths and maintains our stiles and gates when required and without whom the parish would be a less attractive place. Finally, thanks must go to Karen Davis, our Clerk, who is supportive and efficient and without whom we would not manage to operate!

Gwyneth Rees

Vice-Chair Amenities Committee