

## **COLESHILL PARISH COUNCIL**

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

**Meeting held at the Old Timber Store, Carpenter's Yard, Coleshill at 6.30pm**

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. Present**

**Councillors Rory Souter (in the chair), Vicki Mace-Benson, Jo Jameson; County Councillor Bethia Thomas; Charles Leather (National Trust); Katherine Hearn, Sue Homersham, Guy Jordan, Mandy Painter, Irene Pietersen, Ken & Janet Ragon-Chambers, Ros Webster, Leone Ward.**

#### **2. Apologies**

**Oliver Fox, Gemma Fox, Rachel Knight, Verity Manners, District Councillors Katherine Foxhall and Virat Patel sent apologies for their absence.**

#### **3. Minutes of previous meeting**

**Minutes of the meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2024 were approved by the PC and those present.**

#### **4. Local Government reports**

**Drain clearing should have happened, PC to check and report any remaining work to be done. Signage understood to have been completed.**

**Road closure – B4019 on 13<sup>th</sup> April for pole testing between Badbury Clump and Colleymore Farm – it has not been possible to co-ordinate a road repair despite efforts. Chris Grain Traffic Officer noted as a good contact to liaise with at OCC over future road quality issues.**

**Solar Farm – Bethia understands there has been no engagement by Vale planning officers on the Old Hayes Solar Farm site. Apparently, there is a proposal at Wanborough, East Swindon.**

#### **Local Government Re-Organisation**

**Current plans to abolish District and County Councils in favour of a single Unitary Authority. Above that there would be a mayoral authority covering a larger area – possibly including Oxon and Berks. Our local councillor would not favour Swindon being included in that area.**

**The smaller geography discussed on 21 March included the following options:**

- i) County Council wishing to stay as a single unitary authority;**
- ii) Split unitary West Oxon, Cherwell and City as a separate Oxfordshire unitary, then South Oxon, Vale and West Berks forming an amalgamation called Ridgeway Council. (West Berks already a unitary council so would make it easier). Bethia in favour**

of smaller unitary authorities to give residents more of a voice, more responsive etc. Oxon as a unitary would be the third largest council ever created and would be the largest rural/semi-rural entity.

- iii) Expanded Oxon proposal – suggesting Oxford City would expand taking in all surrounding areas, and with South Oxon and Vale going to Berks or West Swindon – as a three-unitary model but not in line with government directive, and thought not to be viable.

Deadline for full proposals is 28<sup>th</sup> November. All District Councils except for the City in favour of the two-unitary model. The County Council is in favour of a whole county unitary, and City not sure of their position.

Next steps in 2027 will be an election to form a shadow authority and in 2028 further elections to form the final version and have a mayoral election as well. Currently the focus is on working through these 3 options. Full picture will emerge over next couple of months.

Question on powers of a mayor – they would be all encompassing. Bethia's Liberal Democrat party opposed to this idea of a single mayor, taking away the democratic voice of the people. However, following government proposals at present.

Bethia circulating her report with more details and further information can be found on the council website under Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation.

Question on whether parish councils will be secure. Expected to be so. Bethia in favour of locals having a stronger voice.

With local elections on 1 May Bethia hoped she would remain in position but, if not, she thanked those present for their support.

#### **4. Matters arising**

- a) Traffic, road, drains and signage issues: covered above. Action for PC to report any road drains not cleared and still outstanding.
- b) Churchyard wall: Progressing well and hard work, minor problem hoped to have been solved over materials and road access, area at back of churchyard can be used as parking. Hoping to be completed by next meeting in July.
- c) Parkland visitor management and conservation: Covered in NT report.
- d) Old Hayes Solar Farm proposal update:

Recent contact through Vicky and the NT – application date being moved to Q2 after additional surveys. Drone survey to be undertaken. Visual impact work is required. Group thinks there should be an additional drop-in session, Vicky to request this from ABEI.

Group considering how to pace the opposition until an application is submitted. The group's engagement with local community has been ongoing with plenty of activity reported.

Next to consider is professional help which will require fund-raising, to be led on best approach to appeal an application/decision. Timing of engagement with local press is important. Plus importance of working with the NT.

Ros Webster suggesting PC check whether they had receive alerts of any planning application. Guy Jordan volunteering to check planning applications on a weekly basis.

Charles Leather reported that the NT have raised questions in a meeting on 19 March and ABEI have responded with visual impact updates. Flood mitigation discussion is ongoing. Suggested they engage with local residents again.

ABEI Energy have a website, although details not up to date.

Owner of the land Charles Horton not prepared to engage with local community.

e) Updates to PC Website – Lady Martin’s photos have been uploaded.

5. Finance update. Two cuts of cemetery have been completed, PC has enough in budget for maintenance until the end of October, only other expenditure is for the website of £10.

6. National Trust Liaison Committee – Mandy reported that the group is keen to meet Keith, the new Area Manager, as soon as a date is agreed. Speed camera – requires three people – volunteers required! Let Mandy Painter know please. Charles Leather reported an initiative by Gloucestershire County Council in Lechlade and Fairford with a black box recording vehicle speeds – may be something to look into.

#### 7. National Trust Report

Charles Leather discussed the main points of the National Trust report, attached to these minutes, including:

- a) Keith Azarati-Wilkie sends apologies but will plan to come to next meeting.
- b) Let estate updates – maintenance at Buscot. Refurbishment of flooded properties planned to start in May.
- c) Exterior decorations across estate happening this summer.
- d) Coleshill parkland update – Saunders cattle herd arriving as grass grows. River field only to be cut for hay.
- e) Visitors – signs to be erected reminding of ground nesting birds. Signage to be made clearer where walkers can go.
- f) Poo bag bins reminder to empty – apparently one collection had been missed.
- g) No intention to have monitors in park to direct visitors.
- h) Tree felling round top of park, repairing ha-ha and Old Shrubbery walk. Estate railings from Clock House to Courtleaze to be replaced. Fencing

on either side of Waterloo ditch and around parts of park to change from timber posts to metal posts

Questions on 1) signage and signage overload – request not to over-sign. and 2) False Acacia / locust trees and elder bushes above Courtleaze. Request to clear and tidy up from the mess that it currently is – Charles stated work is planned to do this at time of rails replacement.

- i) Coleshill vacant cottages – 6 properties planned to be refurbished this summer – tender process concluding in advance of planned 2 May start – quite large contractor presence in village expected over summer. Updates through the newsletter.
- j) Potholes at bottom of village plan require repair.
- k) Village works – planning application for granary – bat survey expected if at night then local residents will be made aware.

8. Local Government reports – County Councillor Bethia as above, District report to be circulated if available.

10. Planning applications

No planning applications received.

11. Any other business

- a) 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May will be celebrated with a gathering at bunker for a drink to toast the auxilliers. Cake being provided and prosecco at the pub.
- b) Drain clearing – Mandy reports - 2 drains done by pub done. 1 outside pub, 2 inside school lane, 1 outside no.35/35 and no. 33 – all need clearing. Also – potholes on School Lane – need reporting on FixMyStreet. Finally, traffic in village – sometimes impossible to move with clogged traffic – solution needs to be thought about when road busy, particularly with parked cars. Mandy asked if there could be some system if local road closure that the village can be notified of increased traffic so that the road can be kept clear of parked cars. Residents to be mindful of situation, and request that the NT notifies contractors to keep their vehicles clear of road as much as possible.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at 6.30 pm at the Old Timber Store unless otherwise notified.