

The 2013-2014 Annual Report of Colwall Parish Council

John Mills- Chairman, Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Finance and General Purposes Committee

2013/14 was another satisfactory financial year with performance comfortably ahead of expectation.

The Income and Expenditure statement shows a surplus of £8,598. This compares with a surplus of £8,431 last year. However, this year's surplus was artificially inflated due to problems of the British Red Cross delivering the Warden scheme which meant that our expenditure on this scheme was £3,549 less than expected. Excluding this, the underlying surplus was £5,049.

The two significant increases in expenditure in 2013/14 over the previous year were:

- £2,215 in Village Amenities spending which is the largest cost centre with the largest budget; this was not unexpected, and
- £3,711 spent in initial preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

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 two increases itemised above, which were not unexpected, the Council's finances performed comfortably under budget as they have done for the last many years. This is a credit to Councillors for their ever increasing awareness and understanding of the Council's finances, and to our Clerk for her administration of those finances. In this regard we are considerably better served than many other councils, some much larger than ours.

It should be noted that considerable expenditure will be incurred in 2014/15 in completion of the Neighbourhood Development Plan but an adequate Budget has been agreed for this and suitable funds transferred to an allocated reserve for this purpose. Notwithstanding this, the General Reserve stands at £42,865 and the allocated reserve funds are comfortably adequate.

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

My 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

John Stock Chairman, Planning and Development Committee

The main responsibilities of this group is considering local Planning and Development matters in our capacity as statutory consultees to Herefordshire Council planning authority. We also deal with strategic and local transportation issues. This group meets bi-monthly.

Firstly my thanks to Barry for many years' service as chairman, who recently stepped down from this committee.

The applications of particular interest this last year have been;

- i) Evendine Corner, where the Inspector agreed with the objectors and the Parish Council and rejected the application.
- ii) The Bottling Plant site; this was considered twice, in April and in November. On both occasions the Council's recommendation was for the application to be rejected. The first application was withdrawn and the second went to Herefordshire's planning committee on 23 April 2014, where it was approved.

With the notable exception of the Bottling Plant site, recent recommendations by the planning officer have closely matched the Council's view.

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.

We were pleased to welcome Mark Hughes to the committee who joining this committee during for the year.

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

A separate report has been prepared by the Neighbourhood Development Plan working party.

John Stock

Chairman Planning & Development Committee

John Stock – Lead, Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Party

This has been an interesting year of which the main items of note are;

1. We responded to the consultation on the Herefordshire Core Strategy, but with little effect.
2. We established a Colwall Neighbourhood Development Plan dedicated website which was hosted by Herefordshire Council.
3. A Preliminary Landscape and Capacity Assessment was completed, paid for and arranged by the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership.

4. A second Detailed Landscape and Capacity Assessment was commissioned by the Parish Council and has been completed.
5. A significant grant from DCLG was applied for and secured for the Landscape and Capacity Assessment.
6. The planning and environmental data plans were prepared in a GIS.
7. Our website was relocated to a private host, to give us more control and functionality.
8. A second public meeting on the Neighbourhood Development Plan was held in October giving an update on progress and presenting the Landscape and Capacity Assessment.
9. We responded to the draft Malvern Hills AONB Building Design Guide, all our concerns were addressed in the final document.
10. We met with our new Neighbourhood Plan liaison officer, Sam Banks, Herefordshire Council.
11. We have commenced discussion about the policies we wish to cover in the Plan.
12. We met with a consultant with a view to taking professional assistance to write the plan as it is clear we do not have the resources or knowledge to achieve this in a reasonable timescale and with the certainty of producing a Plan that will achieve what we desire.

My thanks go to all the Working Group members including our clerk for their continued dedication. My thanks particularly go to Karen for her endless good advice and assistance.

John Stock

Lead, Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group

Jim Beard – Chairman, Village Amenities Committee

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.

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.

Several new seats have been added to the village thanks to private donations for their installation.

The railings which once separated Aunt Alice from the Meadow have been taken out of storage, shot-blasted and repainted. These railings have been installed in the Meadow and as I write we are in the process of installing a Memorial Garden outside the Library

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.

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 and last but not least to our hard-working Parish Clerk, Karen who keeps us on the straight and narrow

Jim Beard

Chairman of Village Amenities

Countryside element of the Village Amenities

Although the Countryside Committee merged with the Amenities Committee last May we continue to discuss the Countryside issues and I present this report as a brief resume of the business conducted.

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. We know that there is still outstanding work to be done in the Reserve particularly on the pond and some of the trees and intend to review and renew the Management Plan. The Nature Reserve continues to be used by many members of the community as well as walkers.

Footpaths

The extraordinary weather again made keeping the footpaths clear of vegetation a difficult job and in some areas the footpaths became waterlogged. Some landowners have installed easy access gates and we now also have one RADA key controlled gate for disabled use. The Footpath Officer found communications with the Area Rights of Way Warden has historically been difficult but the procedures introduced by Balfour Beatty have produced another level of difficulty. A Parish walk was organized for the Council, again we endeavoured to provide a walk without stiles, but only one member of the council attended.

Colwall Green

Malvern Hills Conservators felled diseased trees at the Green and previous years replacements are looking in good condition despite the attention from rabbits. Consultation regarding the drainage

ditch which overflows is ongoing. The broken white fencing is due to be replaced by MHC in the near future.

We welcomed Derek Rees as the Parish Footpath Officer and he wishes to thank all the parish walkers who regularly walk our footpaths and report any problems. The Committee also wish to thank the co-opted members of the Committee whose help and advice we value. We are indebted to our landowners who keep the footpaths clear on their land and are happy to liaise with us.

A big thanks must go to Stephen Maund who clears our footpaths and maintains our stiles and gates when required and is always cheerful, even in the rain!

Finally thanks must go to Karen Davis, our Clerk, who keeps us on the straight and narrow and is always efficient and supportive.

Gwyneth Rees

Vice Chairman Amenities Committee

Nicky Carless – Chairman, Colwall Parish Council

Chairman's Annual Report 2013 to 2014

As expected in the last 12 months Colwall Parish Council has had to make some difficult decisions in light of the reduced expenditure by Herefordshire Council. This reduction has impacted on the village with the library service being threatened with closure. The Parish Council started negotiations with Herefordshire Council in early Summer to gain a better understanding of how Herefordshire Council wished to resolve the situation. The Parish Council agreed to ask parishioners if they wished to support a library service by funding the service of a librarian. This financial support would come through an increase in the parish precept. Each household was asked to vote if they supported such a rise and a definite 'yes' vote was received along with many offers of volunteer time. This has resulted in a partnership between Herefordshire Council, the Millennium Room Trustees and Colwall Parish Council to provide a library service for 15 hours a week as from the 1st April 2014. The Millennium Room Trustees and Herefordshire Council are working with the volunteers to try and extend these hours. It is early days for this 'new' library but the move to the new arrangement has been seamless, just as the Parish Council wished. Towards the end of this year a full assessment of this service will be made to ensure the village is getting value for money.

It has been reported earlier in this document the Parish Council have spent many hours discussing the redevelopment of the old Malvern Water site. This has been one of the largest proposed developments in the village for a long time. We have tried to work to get the best solution for the village. No doubt this next 12 months will see this development come to fruition and we look forward to welcoming new residents to our village and village life.

In the last 12 months we have welcomed 2 new members onto the Parish Council – Wendy Cottam and Mark Hughes. They both have young children and were keen to get more involved in their community and the Parish Council.

The year 2014-2015 is the last year of the current term of office for our Councillors. If you would like to become more involved with your community, do consider standing for election to the Parish Council in May 2015. We meet once a month in the village hall at 7.30pm to reach decisions about the Parish Council assets such as the playgrounds, look at planning applications, as well as voicing opinions on consultation documents and represent the Parish Council on various outside bodies such as the Malvern Hills Conservators. If you would like further information do contact me or Karen our Parish Clerk.

Finally I would yet again like to thank my fellow Councillors for volunteering their time to serve on the Parish Council, as well as thanking Karen – our Parish Clerk. Karen supports the running of the Council and without her work we would not function so well as a Council.

Nicky Carless

Chairman – Colwall Parish Council