

The Annual Report of Colwall Parish Council 2016-2017



Chairman's Report

This has been a busy year for the council which had several major issues to deal with, the focus being the allocation of a site for the replacement primary school and the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Committees too were busy: Village Amenities, led by Jim Beard and supported by its play equipment group, has delivered some great new play equipment; Finance and General Purposes, led by Gwyneth Rees, has managed a changing and challenging financial outlook. Planning, led by John Stock, continues its detailed assessment of every planning application submitted. We have also established a new working party and to review the options for our library. All this work is supported by a highly capable and efficient clerk, Karen Davis, and by the experience and wisdom of the council's vice chairman and previous chairman, Nicky Carless. The village owes them, and every one of the councillors who chairs and participates in these committees and working groups, a giant vote of gratitude. Thank you, clerk and councillors, for the time and hard work you volunteer for this council.

Key achievements

1. Working in dialogue with parishioners and Herefordshire Council, the Parish Council overcame some significant objections to certain aspects of proposals for the new primary school on Mill Lane and enabled the project for its construction to commence on schedule.

2. The Council continued fine-detail work on Colwall's Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), collating hundreds of observations from the NDP website and remaining in constant dialogue with Herefordshire Council. Colwall is gaining recognition for its rigorous attention to detail in selecting and assessing sites and in its commitment to achieving the development target which has been imposed. Particular issues confronting our NDP include:

i) our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status. In my view Colwall has surpassed Herefordshire Council in giving due regard to the statutory AONB designation which covers the village by using a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment as the primary criterion for allocating sites for development. For its part, Herefordshire is holding Colwall to a 14 per cent

development target, which is a blanket target across Herefordshire whether or not the parish lies within a nationally-designated landscape.

ii) Our status as the largest village in Herefordshire. As one parish council member recently put it, we may be approaching a point at which Colwall changes from being a village to becoming a small town. At every level, from policy-setting through design guidelines to the detailed analysis of each available site for development, the NDP (and the Parish Council Planning and Development Committee more generally) seeks to retain Colwall's underlying character as a rural village.

Village Amenities Committee

3. The Parish Council's three Committees—Village Amenities, Finance and General Purposes, and Planning—are where a large proportion of individual councillors' time is devoted. Village Amenities had a busy year ranging from sorting out users of the village football pitch to maintaining its watch over play and recreational areas around the village. Big thanks to Jim Beard who leads the committee, and all who give their time to serve on it—particularly our co-opted members Freda Ballard and Chris Englefield.

4. The year culminated in securing some new and exciting play equipment for Colwall's play areas. Well done and thank you to the play equipment play equipment working party consisting of Paul Butler, Phil Kendrick and Jim Beard for achieving this: they have sorted out some really great equipment including a climbing rock which reaches beyond the usual swings and roundabouts age range of Colwall's play areas (although I mustn't overlook Councillor Rees's enthusiasm for testing the play equipment around the village when the time came!)

Finance and General Purposes Committee

5. Finance and General Purposes manages our budget and outturn, led by Gwyneth Rees, to whom we owe a big debt of gratitude for keeping us on the straight and narrow. We were also extremely grateful for the input of former councillor, John Mills, in respect of the 2017/18 budget.

Planning and Development Committee

6. Planning and development is led by the indefatigable John Stock, who as well as leading the NDP working party, has presided over a number of significant planning decisions. John and his committee of planning application reviewers, including Nicky Carless, Wendy Cottam, Paul Butler, Diane Taylor, Jim Beard, and recently Andy Allen, spend many hours considering applications and consulting neighbours. It is often a thankless task, and often forgotten that this committee meets fortnightly in order to meet statutory consultation period deadlines. The parish owes all of them a huge round of thanks for the work they do.

7. As noted above, this committee's NDP working party has led on generating a neighbourhood plan for the village. We've had great professional advice from our landscape architect, Carly Tinkler, and the team at Kirkwells led by Louise. The parish council is incredibly fortunate in having John Stock at the tiller of this working party: he has put in hours of work to the plan, and the professionalism of his presentations both to Full Council and to the public are evident for all to see. As a village, we owe him a huge thank you.

Library Working Party

8. The library working group consists of Phil Kendrick, Wendy Cottam and Paul Butler. These councillors have devoted considerable time to assessing how the Library can continue as a village asset, looking at both the Library function itself and its location alongside the Millennium Room. John Daniels, who recently joined the council, has also assisted. Thanks to all of you for your continued efforts.

Other

9. The Parish Council has helped in many smaller ways as well. Every concern that has been raised with me by parishioners has been efficiently and speedily dealt with in the first instance by our supremely capable clerk Karen Davis and by individual councillors.

10. Colwall is extremely lucky in the range of folk it has serving its parish council. I took over as chair in May 2016 from Nicky Carless who had served as chair for the preceding fifteen years. Nicky has been so kind and generous as vice chairman with her support and advice both to me and to the council generally while I've been learning the ropes. The same is true of Karen, who continues to provide a first class service to the council. I've also benefitted from the experience and wisdom of all councillors, from the 'tribal knowledge' of Edith Haynes to the informal straw polling that Rick James often provides when I call by for a Sunday joint (the roasting kind...)

11. Thanks to those councillors whose services we lost over the period: John Mills, Mark Hughes, Ian Cooper and Matt Fraser. And welcome to those who've joined: Andy Allen and John Daniels.

Looking ahead

12. NDP: The 'Regulation 14' formal consultation process is nearly upon us. The plan will undergo two rounds of consultation, with Herefordshire Council and the village, and should bring us towards the 'beginning of the end' of the NDP journey. This will be a significant moment in the plan's development.

13. In her last chairman's report, Nicky Carless reported on the discussions being held 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. I hope that we'll be able to continue these discussions—it is my fault that we haven't done so over this past year. We should hold our feet to the fire on this one, so that we can continue to evolve as a council that is a genuine nexus between parishioners, community groups within the parish, and local government.

Roland Trafford-Roberts

Chairman

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report

This has been another satisfactory year financially. There was an overall surplus of £9,831 against a budgeted deficit of £2,559.; a positive difference for the year of £12,390.

The most notable variations against budget were:-

-The Lengthsman's activities were under budget by £512.00 the budgeted extra work load was not necessary,

-NDP costs were £7,482 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 £4,486; General Maintenance was underspent by £933, Footpath maintenance was under budget by £347, the Railway Garden expenditure was under budget by £360.00, there was very little Play Equipment Maintenance producing a saving over budget of £940, Village Amenities Special project was under budget by £736.

Offsetting this, grass cutting was over budget by £170 due to the addition of the football pitch as a new area to cut and the Nature Reserve expenditure was over budget by £211 after a new interpretation board (this had been funded by a donation of £1000 from Colwall PCC in the previous financial year.

-General Administration came in under budget by £1,300.

-There were no consultancy costs; saving £400.

-Insurance came in under budget by £207.

-Grants and Donations were £983 over budget, after a donation to the MH ANOB of £750 (which had not been budgeted for).

Neighbourhood Development Plan - The net cost of the Neighbourhood Development Plan this year was £3,018 (against a budgeted £10,500) this was due to securing grant funding and some costs being deferred, due to unforeseen delays, in completion of the Plan. The total net cost to date is £17,258.

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 2016/17 stands at £50,126.

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

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, parking and speeding issues. This committee generally meets twice monthly.

During the year 39 applications were considered of which 14 related to trees. The Council made comments on many applications but only formally objected to 3 building applications and 1 tree application.

The 3 building applications the Council objected to were;

161407 – Which was the new Village School and was subsequently resolved after much negotiation,

170317 – Box Cottage which was subsequently amended and we had no objection and

171025 – Roof extension at Evendine Lodge.

The tree application the Council objected to, was:

163121 - We objected to the loss of 2 Thuja as not warranted to protect a pine tree.

I would like to express my thanks to all the members of the Committee, particularly those who carry out the majority of the application reviews, for all their hard work over the past year.

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

John Stock

Chairman Planning & Development Committee

Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Party Report

The whole of the previous year was absorbed by the allocation of a site for the school, including the last public meeting in November 2015, and the discussions and approvals were not completed until June 2016. Consequently the Plan development has been significantly delayed and only restarted at the end of July 2016.

Since then, there have been a number of changes that have significantly impacted on the draft Plan's proposed development including;

Originally Herefordshire Council wished to develop housing as well as the school on the Mill Lane site but subsequently changed their mind.

The school development impacted on the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment on neighbouring land, lowering the LSCA capacity of the remainder of the Mill Lane site but increasing the capacity of an area immediately around the Thai restaurant, which now has applied for permission for 9 homes.

Two landowners indicated their timescale for development was later than the Plan period so their plots could no longer be counted towards the target.

A further site was also lost following lack of owner interest and access issues.

Herefordshire Council's pre Regulation 14 consultation comments, which included rejecting our wish to provide for less development than their target and refusal to count possible dwellings instead of the Nursing Home at the Bottling Plant site as 'deliverable'.

Overall therefore, we are currently 16 dwellings short of our target and are therefore endeavouring to identify additional sites for development or increase the development on those that are available.

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

Over the last year the Amenities Committee has continued to oversee the regular workload around the village. The committee meets 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.

We also oversee the erection and maintenance of the Christmas Tree and lights.

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

It is interesting to note that extra work is being planned for the next Parish year. The Swing installation in the Orlin Road Recreational Area is being replaced. A seesaw will be reinstated on Colwall Green and a climbing rock, aimed for use by older children will be installed in Walwyn Meadow. These works are to be funded by grant monies obtained for us by Karen, our Parish Clerk.

Busy as we are, it is gratifying to see that our work has come within the allocation of the annual budget once again.

Once again we would like to thank our village butcher; D.T. Waller & Sons, for the ongoing sponsorship for the Railway Garden area.

Thanks must be given to all the councillors and co-opted members of the Committee for their hard work, our contractors 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

Report on Countryside element of the Village Amenities Committee

Charlie Ballard Reserve

The new large and small interpretation boards are in place and are being enjoyed, especially by the younger members of the parish. There has been a small outbreak of vandalism, a couple of the smaller interpretation boards were removed and bent, and cans and bottles thrown into the pond. All of which Steven Maund was able to deal with. The original soft fruit and fruit trees continue to flourish within the reserve and are a reminder of what the area was used for during the war. The trees at the entrance to the reserve have been cut back which has opened up the entrance giving a clear view into the reserve. The usual annual repairs have been made to the footpath and steps throughout the reserve.

Footpaths

We welcomed Councillor Paul Butler as our Footpath Officer for the Parish. We are fortunate to have many and varied footpaths in the parish. Generally the footpaths continue to be in good condition and the landowners, by and large, discharge their obligations appropriately. The running repairs of footpaths, stiles and gates are carried out by Steven Maund on behalf of the Parish. It is noted that some of the way markers are fading and should be replaced in due course. We have one volunteer who has offered to keep a watching brief over some of our footpaths and any further volunteers would be most welcome. The Parish Council received a presentation from Mike Everitt of the Unrecorded Ways Project Group. He highlighted the potential loss of interconnectivity of at least six of our footpaths when the National Project to produce a definitive map of footpaths by 2026 is implemented. The Colwall Village Society has taken up the challenge to research and provide the information to ensure that we can keep our footpaths joined up. Again volunteers would be most welcome.

Colwall Green

The twice yearly cutting of the Green has vastly improved the overall look of the area. Cars being parked on the Green continue to be a problem which we hope will be alleviated by the opening of the new school. The bus shelter flower boxes have been a success. I planted them for the summer and then replaced with spring bulbs and recently replanted again for summer flowering. My thanks to the members of Colwall Green community who have undertaken to water the plants during the summer.

Walwyn Meadow

We have just started planting a small area for wild flowers and bulbs on the Walwyn Road side of the meadow. We hope to involve the local cubs in the sowing of wild flower seeds once the weather has improved. A new hedge is about to be planted on the boundary of the play area

and a residential property. The John Andrew's Memorial garden is now well established and appreciated by users of the Library and Millennium Room.

Thanks

Stephen Maund clears footpaths, maintain the stiles and gates within the large footpath network in the parish. He also cuts the grass and hedges in Walwyn Meadow and is generally responsible for our village looking as good as it is. No job is too much trouble and he cheerfully goes about all the work within the parish in all weathers.

Finally thanks must go to our Clerk Karen Davis for the efficient way in which she carries out her job in supporting the Countryside branch of the Amenities Committee

Gwyneth Rees

Vice-Chair Amenities Committee