

Coleshill Parish Council Annual Report

Prepared by the Chair, Tony Treacy, 7 May 2024

I am sure all villagers will be hoping for brighter and drier months ahead after the rain we have had persistently since Autumn. If a silver lining were possible, it has shown the value of the paths that were built on the common by the CMC in recent years and the sheer volume of water has created a pond that many people have told me is one of the largest they have seen in their time living in the village.

The rainfall has inevitably caused other problems and revealed the importance of proper and thorough gully cleaning. One by-product of this has been the discovery that Bucks Council gully maps for Coleshill were incomplete, which explained why some were never cleared. The map has been updated and the parish council, and Jon Herbert in particular, has been working closely with them to try and make sure blocked gulleys are cleared to ensure surface water has somewhere to go. Bucks have also committed to replace the collapsed drain that runs into the pond from Village Road, but that work cannot take place until the water level falls, as otherwise the entire road would be flooded!

Rainfall has also been a big problem for the school. There the issue was not only the volume of standing water caused by blocked gulleys, but also the consequence of the road resurfacing that was done on Village Road in late 2022. Although that work largely failed, and remedial work has thankfully been planned for later this year, it meant the road surface was above the sets, which line the pavement in front of the school, allowing rainwater to run towards the school blocking the school gate and threatening closure if it breached the sandbag defences that were put up to protect school buildings. Thankfully, Bucks agreed to raise the sets and that work was completed in March/April this year.

Another road-related issue that has progressed is the speed limit on Magpie Lane. Bucks eventually provided a route for the parish council to achieve a speed limit reduction from 40mph to 30mph, provided sufficient funds could be raised to pay most of the costs. The parish council would like to thank all those who donated money towards this and is pleased the speed reduction project is now up and running. However, it is possible/likely villagers will only see the results of this in 2025.

Another time-consuming project for councillors relates to the impact on the common at the corner of Windmill Hill and Chalk Hill caused by the underground cabling work being done by UK Power Networks. Council would like to thank Mc Conway for his work on this, and specifically for helping us understand the responsibilities UKPN have to conduct remedial work and for identifying gaps in the wayleave agreements that cover infrastructure installation on common (and private) land. This project also involves the legal team at Bucks Council and is an area of complexity that has been challenging for the parish council. The aim, ultimately, is to make sure remedial work is undertaken to repair damage done to the common land, as well as providing a framework which will enable future works to be better and more transparently managed, to protect the common.

Another big project, being led by Louise Templeton, is to raise funding to replace the playground equipment at the Hill Meadow playground. The equipment, which is assessed annually, has been deemed 'end of life' and given Council does not have the financial resources to replace the current equipment, Louise is coordinating efforts to raise money from several sources. Council hopes to be successful in doing so, to avoid the playground being permanently closed. Of course, time will tell.

Council continues to appreciate the hard work of the CMC in maintaining the Common and the pond. As well as running open meetings, they installed wayfinder posts, pollarded the willows by the

pond, cut the grassland in the common, ran a habitat survey of the west area of the common, and opened the 'Ride' up from Barrack Hill to the Common. More detail can be found in the report written by the Nigel Suttie, who is chair of the Common Management Committee. By way of necessity, a number of dead trees were also cut down in the Jack Adams Field.

Unlike previous years, this past year has seen no changes in terms of councilors following Gemma Clifford-Newman and Ben Morgan joining last year. However, that means there remains a vacancy on the council that is unfilled, and this is a significant concern. I sometimes feel it is worth remembering that the parish council is a voluntary organisation. Councilors are villagers who give up some of their time to attend official council meetings and share the responsibility for dealing with practicalities to ensure Coleshill remains a lovely place to live. I would like to personally thank all councilors for continuing to offer their time and energy to maintaining our beautiful village. The parish council is the means through which village residents have a say on how the village is run (to an extent). Without village support, and specifically without villagers volunteering to stand as councilors, the job becomes progressively harder and may in future threaten the very existence of the parish council itself. I would therefore be delighted to hear from any villager who thought they could spare some time to help.

Other matters on the Council's agenda, that remain ongoing, include working on an emergency contact network, which Ben Morgan is leading, plus the development of a new parish council website and a more robust email system, which will be rolled out later this year. The council would also like to thank Len Tridgell for his help and advice on planning matters.

Finally, I would also especially thank Lynda, who having spent nearly ten years as clerk, has decided to retire in July (if not before). She has done a marvellous job, and her hard work and support are appreciated personally by me and by every councillor. Anyone interested in taking on the role, are invited to apply.