**Minutes of Coldridge Parish Council Meeting 19.30 on Thursday November 16th 2023**

**Present:** **Councillors** Andrew Green, John Smith, Marion Born, Chris Burrows, John Quick, Malcolm Bedford, Ivan Kriznik

**Clerk** Keyth Richardson

**Apologies:** **MDDC Councillors** Natalia Letch & Frank letch

Two members of the public were present.

Before the Open forum Andrew Green gave a moving tribute to former councillor and previous Chairman Jeff Burrows. He served for 50 years on the Parish Council and was kind, thoughtful, caring level headed and calm. He will be sadly missed. Andrew had dropped in hand-written note of thanks in September and Chris Burrows took round the long service award. The family have sent a thank you card to the Parish Council,

**Open Forum**

It was suggested that this year the Parish Council decorate the small Christmas tree growing in the verge outside Church Cottage. This was agreed, and John Smith offered to provide the electricity for the lights. It is expected that there will be carol singing round the tree on December 23rd before the mobile carol singers move off around the parish. The switch on of the lights will be timed to coincide with the Parish Church lighting, all TBC. On Dec 15th there will be a Carol Service in the church.

Questions were raised about the mirror at Frogbury Cross, which will be dealt with later in the meeting, which started at 7:45

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| 2023/24-53 | **Welcome by Chairman** | Andrew Green welcomed all to the meeting |
| 2023/24-54 | **Recording of meetings** | no-one was recording the meeting |
| 2023/24-55 | **Apologies** | Apologies had been received from MDDC Cllrs Natalia Letch and Frank Letch |
| 2023/24-56 | **Declarations of interest** | None reported. |
| 2023/24-57 | **Minutes** | The minutes of the meeting on September 14th 2023, were approved and signed |
| 2023/24-58 | **Matters arising not appearing on the agenda** | nothing |
| 2023/24-59 | **Report on DALC conference** | Malcolm Bedford attended this and found it to be very useful, and he learnt a lot from it. He also met up with old friend, Ken Browse, who he intends to meet up with. He felt it was very useful for councils to be able to cross-reference each other. Next year’s date is October 2nd, and Malcolm intends to go. |
| 2023/24-60 | **Closure of DCC mobile library** | John Smith, who has taken on a leading role in the county wide campaign gave a full report. In it he explained that DCC had used some very dubious data, not comparing like with like, and he felt DCC was being circumspect on its financial stability. The July decision to close the libraries had been called in for Scrutiny.  This decision was immediately ‘called in’ for Scrutiny in view of (a) the social and educational importance of the service, (b) the lack of a fully costed, investigated and proven alternative and (c) the Council’s Statutory Duty to provide “free and equal access to books and education” (***The Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964***)  AND ALSO…  **Gov.UK Site: “Libraries as a Statutory Service”:**  (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service>)  ALSO…  **Handbook: Delivering Local Solutions for Libraries:**  (https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=55338fd1a0&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-a:r-8923582115185972343&th=18bd85b872f47768&view=att&disp=inline&realattid=18bd85b72ad617ccdcf1)  The Scrutiny Committee met on 28th September and voted, by a cross-party working majority, to send it back to Cabinet with a recommendation to reconsider the whole matter, including alternative methods of funding the vehicles and to investigate partnerships, vehicle leasing, commercial sponsorship and central government grants, etc. This was a partial victory in that it provided a ‘stay of execution’ and a chance to ‘think again’.  At the full cabinet meeting on November 8th they voted unanimously to decommission, but not before the end of February 2024.  John felt that this was always going to be the case. It was apparent from some of the arrogant comments that city-based councillors have no concept of the needs of rural communities. Aspects which give hope for further action against DCC are that it is not meeting it’s legal requirements regarding providing educational and social considerations, its duty to provide books, the incomplete and improper costing basis.  The campaign is continuing with support from MDDC Cllrs Natalia and Frank Letch; the petition has over 10,000 signatures.  Possible alternatives being touted around are on-line books, community libraries in local areas, but no indication of how the stock will be renewed or updated, good neighbours driving to the urban libraries (hardly environmentally friendly) and extensive use of volunteers, but no indication if any of their costs will be covered.  It was noted that DCC has spent millions on 5 new gritters- it was suggested, partially tongue in cheek, these could be used to carry books around for the 350 days a year they are not needed for gritting. |
| 2023/24-61 | **Long service award** | As mentioned before the meeting Chris Burrows presented Jeff Burrows with his award and then he and Andrew presented Jim Sampson with his. It was very touching, and Jim was quite overcome and overwhelmed |
| 2023/24-62 | **Church Clock update and action plan for fundraising** | The Chairman reminded all present that the Parish Council must always look to find best value for money for any expenditure. Chris Burrows reported that a skilled clock repairer had taken down all the relevant clock parts, assisted by Chris. They are now awaiting collection by a second skilled clock repairer next week who will fit new bearings and then the parts will be re-fitted locally by the first mentioned clock repairer.    Ivan Kriznik reported on his progress in setting up crowd funding, which is all in place, the account and Clerk have been approved. He circulated a paper copy of what will be on the crowd funding website. The cost to the Council be a levy of 2.4% plus 20p per donation. It is hoped to raise money from the wider Coldridge Community which stretches as far as Florida. If there is a good response, then there will be no need to draw on the precept money either in the current reserves or for 2024/25. There is already £1270 in donations in the accounts, and this leaves about £2230 to raise through crowd funding.  It was agreed to run this campaign, initially for 4 weeks and Ivan was thanked for the work he has put into this. |
| 2023/24-63 | **NALC settlement** | The Council agreed to implement the NALC 2022/23 local Govt Service Pay Award of a flat rate payment of £1,925 pro rata. This is equivalent of a £1 an hour pay rise to £12.42. |
| 2023/24-64 | **Finance** | The following payments were agreed.   1. North East Trophies £38.00 2. DALC Conference £54.00 3. St Matthew Churchyard £450.00 4. Allerbridge Chapel Graveyard £350.00 5. H Smith Grass Cutting £110.00 6. clerk’s wages £307.58 7. Tax on clerks wages £76.80 8. clerk’s expenses  £4.95   The clerk asked if he could investigate setting up internet banking for the PCC and report back in January, and it was agreed to do this. It was felt that this was the way to go to save money and clerk’s time. |
| 2023/24-65 | **To agree a Precept and Budget for 2024/2025** | The Council reviewed the draft budget produced by the Clerk. It was agreed to add in £150 for a mower service.  There was long discussion on the level of precept to set.  There is a widely held concern that services currently being provided by higher authorities such as MDDC and DCC may be passed to Parish Councils, such as has happened with the graveyard grants. This is already in place with some councils who have taken on Road Warden schemes to fix potholes and minor highways repairs.  There is also concern Coldridge Village Hall may be facing an annual rates bill of £2500 from 2024 due to subsidies being removed by the government and MDDC. The Parish Council could consider helping to cover this cost, which is about 50% of the annual running costs of the hall.  The outcome of the crowd funding for the clock will affect how much money from the precepts and reserves the Council will need to spend to cover the total cost of the repairs estimated at £3,500.  One councillor noted the actual amount they have paid in Council tax to the Parish Council has been diminishing for the past 7 years, partly as result of the increase in the number of inhabited properties, partly due the Council not proceeding with the purchase of land for playground, churchyard extension and recreation purposes.  In the light of the above points it was agreed to defer the decision on the precept to the January 2025 meeting, by which time the result of the crowd funder will be known. It was agreed not to reduce the precept below £5000. |
| 2023/24-66 | **Attendance at John Hart see 2 Nov email** | Andrew Green and the Clerk have registered for this zoom meeting at 18:00 on Dec 14th: all other councillors are invited to do so. |
| 2023/24-67 | **Coldridge Village Noticeboard repairs** | The work for the Village Green noticeboard is in hand but is being affected by the weather. When the noticeboard is out of action some use can be made of the church noticeboard. Malcolm Bedford has purchased some oak from Winkleigh Timber and is working on this with Trevor Mckown.  Chris Burrows will talk to Graham Warsop about putting a noticeboard inside the Linhay at West Leigh to protect it and make it more accessible. The current one is too small and not worth repairing.  East Leigh was given some maintenance in the last few years and will be looked at after the other two. |
| 2023/24-68 | **Planning** | There were no comments on the three applications for Clotworthy Farm 23/01723/FULL 23/01724/Full and 23/01726/FULL,  It was noted that the barn conversion at Holm Hill 23/01418/PNCOU had been refused by MDDC. |
| 2023/24-69 | **Highways** | Ivan Kriznik, Chris Burrows and Marion Born had met with residents of the four houses at Frogbury Cross to discuss safety issues including visibility and parking.  As result part of a fence had been reduced in height, and a hedge trimmed.  The loose manhole cover had been re-set by DCC Highways and then the following day SWW cut the whole thing out and replaced it with a new one.  The drain has been cleared out and is tagged for gully cleaning by DCC – the blue tag indicates this.  The MDDC Neighbourhood Officer visited and apart from noting one vehicle was illegal (which has since been removed) MDDC do not plan to take any further action, not even to repair the faulty light.  They suggested that a marker line be put on the highway indicating 10m from the junction, which should be used for parking, but this would not be enforceable.  The mirror is deemed to be illegal by DCC, and 2 Councillors stated it was dangerous as it gave false sense of security. A plain mirror would be more effective, even though it would also be illegal.  Ivan Kriznik had to chase Stephen Tucker for an update and in his reply he re-stated that the mirror would be removed, and a return fee would be charged to get it back. Ivan will inform the residents of this so if they wish they can remove it. (it has been removed within 24 hours)  C&R Construction signs. These colour and style of these have been agreed by C&R and DCC with input from Coldridge Councillors. They will be dark green with cream lettering. This was agreed2 weeks ago, and APG will contact C&R to confirm these are in hand with the sign manufacturer.  To reiterate; the public are encouraged to continue to report defects on the DDC website as this is what the DCC Officers use to note issues and to plan work. <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/report-a-pothole/> |
| 2023/24-70 | **Councillor’s reports** | It was noted that Gilscott drain is not working and needs to be reported to DCC.  Post meeting note, the Clerk went to report this and found it had been reported on Nov 12th at 17.44. he added himself to this report number **W231678284**.  Discussion of D-Day 80th – it was felt there were sufficient people who served as Councillors and on the Village Hall Committee to ensue this was built into the list of events for 2024. |
| 2023/24-71 | **Date of next meeting** | 1. The dates for 2024 Jan 18th March 21st May 9th July 18th Sept 19th Nov 21st |

The meeting closed at 21.15

Signed: