

Coberley Parish Council Annual Assembly 25 May 2022

Chair's Report

Review of PC's key activities from May 2021 to May 2022.

The PC has held 6 meetings, including the annual meeting which immediately preceded this Assembly

Personnel

In June 2021, **Cllr David Carlton** was co-opted onto the Parish Council, bringing it back to full complement of 5 councillors.

On 5 February, our Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer **Deborah Cook** resigned from the post and the Council was pleased to announce the appointment of a new Clerk to the Council and RFO, **Belinda Holder**, who joined us on 1 February 2022. Belinda brings extensive experience to this role and will be a great asset to the team.

Finance

- **Parish Council finances in healthy state**
- **2021/22 expenditure below budget** (requirement for professional planning services deferred; no parish event held). Additional cost of grass-cutting village green
- **Precept for 2022/23 increased to £8,500 (from £6,500)** to reflect higher staff costs, insurance and asset maintenance costs.
- **Significant financial activity in 2021/22:** Salary of Clerk to the Council (principal expenditure), insurance, asset maintenance, web site maintenance
- **Full set of Accounts and Transparency Code documentation** will, upon completion of end-of-year accounting, be available on the PC's website, or by request to Clerk at info@coberleyparish.co.uk .

In future, **CDC will charge parish councils for contested parish council election costs. This could lead to an increase in precept and, hence, Council Tax on parishioners.** In the 2023 4-yearly election this will be 50% of the cost. From 2027, it will be 100%. Contested by-elections will see charges of 50% in 2024, phased up to 100% in 2026. The indicative costs provided by CDC for Coberley are £1,100 for a shared election (where a Parish election is held at the same time as a district, county, national or other election where costs would be shared) and £2,000 for a single seat by-election

The PC objected to the system proposed. As is common in small parishes, Coberley has not had a contested election in years. It is, therefore, difficult to justify a rise in precept to taxpayers, just to hold funds on account in case a contested election becomes necessary.

The Parish Council feels it would be more appropriate to pay retrospectively. CDC could continue to cover the cost of a contested election, should one be necessary, and the amount could then be raised by the Parish Council through the precept in the next available year to pay back the cost to CDC. It is the PC's understanding, however, that CDC will go ahead with the original proposal.

Planning & Environmental issues

PC has continued to monitor planning applications and environmental matters with a balanced approach, taking account of the criteria upon which CDC Planning Department will assess applications.

PC consulted on 20 planning submissions in the period. Objection was made against a Planning in Principle application for development of **4-5 homes on land at Hartley Lane near Seven Springs**, where parishioners and councillors had concerns. An Appeal related to refusal of proposed expansion of a **Hartley Lane Traveller Site** is still in progress The PC's objection will have representation at the Planning Inspectorate hearing in due course.

Coberley PC added its signature to a letter from a number of PCs in Cotswold District objecting to **CDC's introduction of a planning review panel to decide whether a matter goes to planning committee.** It is felt

that this move could reduce the opportunity for public scrutiny on some applications which may be sensitive in a local community.

Village Green

- The PC arranged a professional **structural survey of the sundial monument** to assess condition and stability. While there has been some loss of section at the base of the pillar it is not at imminent risk of collapse, but remedial works are recommended to ensure the long-term integrity of the memorial. Various options presented in the survey are being costed for review and decision.
- The PC, with ownership of the village green vested in it, has arranged for regular **grass-cutting**.

Highways & Road Safety issues

- **The Parish Council continually monitors parish roads (maintenance & safety aspects)** and works with GCC Highways to achieve solutions. A **Highway Actions Report** is forwarded to GCC for updates ahead of each PC meeting. Reports are listed on the Parish Council website. Key areas of attention have been **A436** (Ullenwood/Cowley crossroads; Public footpath crossings near Seven Springs, speed limit reduction), **Coberley village** (surface water drainage and speeds through village. The PC would like to apply for a 20mph zone under a single Traffic Regulation Order through GCC Highways, alongside other parishes. This is dependent on County Council policy review). Various **signage and road-marking** issues across Parish.
- The PC maintains contact with GCC to ensure that **salt & grit bins** are refilled in Autumn and that small back-up stocks are held in the Parish.
- **NO CRASH Road Safety group**. Cllr Piggott continues to represent the PC on this group which is chaired by Cllr Hodgkinson and focuses primarily on the A436 and adjoining roads.
- The PC remains involved with the **A417 Missing Link** scheme progress to keep the issues it has raised to the fore. The scheme is currently in the **Development Consent Order** phase wherein the Planning Inspectorate completed the Examination of the application by 16 May. The findings, conclusions and a recommendation will be made to the Secretary of State by 16 August and a decision made. This is due by the end of this year. The PC has agreed a **Statement of Common Ground** with National Highways (formerly Highways England) **Key areas of concern raised: New Ullenwood junction roundabout; Leckhampton Hill Road; A436; Ullenwood/Cowley crossroads; Noise and air pollution during construction and when in operation.**

Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

Coberley PC will be lighting a **celebratory beacon** at Hartley Hill, Hartley Farm on Hartley Lane at 21:45 on Thursday 2 June. This is kindly hosted by the Powell Family. The event will start from 19:30. Food will be available to buy, at a discounted price, from Suzie's Burger van. A supply of beverages will be available free-of-charge, provided by the PC.

Attendees will be welcome to bring their own picnics of food and drinks.

The PC is inviting parishioners and their guests to make a charitable donation to the British Red Cross, Ukraine Crisis Appeal.

Parish Emergency Plan: The content of the plan remains relevant but new volunteers are required.

The Arthur Connolly Trust: As set out in the Trust Deed, the PC is required to nominate one trustee. Cllr Powell has been appointed. The Trust was set up for the purposes of alleviating the hardship of the elderly in Coberley.

Parish web site www.coberleyparish.co.uk The PC encourages parishioners to make use of its web site for information on the Council and its activities and to make enquiries.

Cllr Duncan McGaw, Chair – Coberley Parish Council
25 May 2022