

Colwich Parish Council



ANNUAL REPORT 2024 – 2025

The Parish Centre, St Marys Road, Little Haywood, Stafford, ST18 0TX

Tel: 01889 882665 Email: clerk@colwichparishcouncil.gov.uk

www.colwichparishcouncil.gov.uk



INTRODUCTION

Colwich parish covers, amongst others, the villages of Colwich, Little Haywood, Great Haywood, Farley, Coley, Moreton, Wolseley Bridge and Bishton. The southern boundary is along Bower Lane/Stafford Brook Road in Rugeley with the northern boundary being just beyond Farley Bridge (the A51/Manchester railway line bridge). In the east the area continues to Moreton and the Bellamour Lane railway bridge whilst in the west the boundary is the Sherbrook Valley, Stepping Stones, Berry Hill on Cannock Chase and the northern exit of the Shugborough tunnel.

Colwich parish is part of the Haywood & Hixon ward of Stafford Borough and the Trent Valley Division of Staffordshire County.

The Council has 14 members, elected every four years, who are split between the two wards of Great Haywood [HHA] and Colwich & Little Haywood [HHB]. Each ward has 7 members who, once elected, represent the entire parish. The 2023 Ordinary Election saw 9 members elected who then co-opted a further 5 members.

MEETINGS

The Full Council usually meets at 7:30pm on the first Thursday of every month. As in recent years, the December meeting was moved to the last Thursday before Christmas to be the final meeting of the calendar year. The Council has a number of themed Committees:

Communications	(Newsletter and website).
Complaints	(Oversight of Complaints policies and procedures).
Employment	(Staffing issues and policies).
Environment	(Working with Colwich Parish in Bloom; Colwich Allotments Association; Flower & Vegetable Show and Help Nature Thrive).
Events	(Summer fete and Christmas Lights switch-on and competition, Scarecrow and Halloween competitions).
Finance	(Council's budget and makes recommendations to Full Council on the precept).
Leisure	(JPF refurbishment project).
Planning	(Responds to planning applications within the parish).
Policy	(Oversees the Councils general administration policies).
Young People	(To assist in the reformation of the Youth Council).

Formal meetings are open to the public who may raise questions and concerns on any item on the agenda.

The Youth Council, populated by any young person in the parish from Year 6 to Year 13, restarted during the 2023/24 year. Unfortunately, due to exam pressures on the older Youth Councillors, and moving off to University, the Youth Council was again put into abeyance. The Young People Committee is looking at how to restart the Youth Council and will be meeting with year 5 and year 6 pupils of our 3 primary schools.

Cllr Wendy Plant was elected Chairman and Cllr Annette Bloor was elected Vice Chairman at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 2nd May 2024. The Chairmen and Vice Chairman of Committees were elected at the Annual Meeting. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Complaints Committee were elected in June 2024, on the creation of the Committee. The Leisure Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman changed in January 2025 due to ill health. The list of Chairmen and Vice Chairman, as of 28th February 2025, were:

COMMITTEE
 Communications
 Complaints
 Employment
 Environment
 Events
 Finance
 Leisure
 Planning
 Policy
 Young People

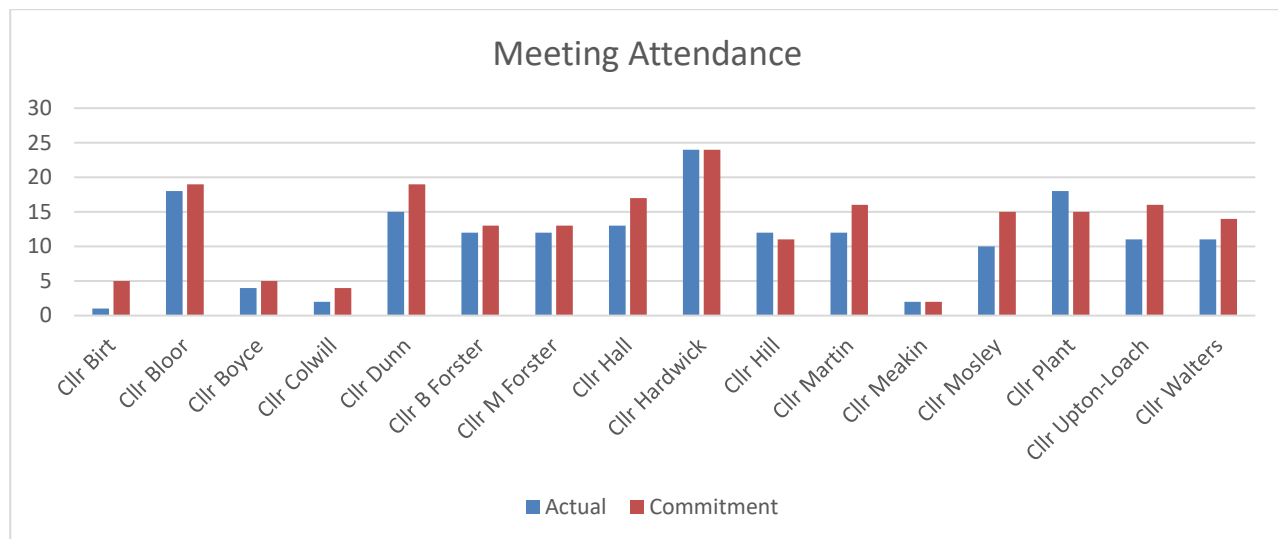
CHAIRMAN
 Cllr Hardwick
 Cllr Bloor
 Cllr Bloor
 Cllr Upton-Loach
 Cllr Plant
 Cllr Plant
 Cllr Dunn
 Cllr Bloor
 Cllr Hardwick
 Cllr Upton-Loach

VICE CHAIRMAN
 Cllr Dunn

 Cllr Martin
 Cllr Bloor
 Cllr Hardwick
 Cllr Dunn
 Cllr Hardwick
 Cllr M Forster
 Cllr Plant
 Cllr B Forster

Two Councillors resigned their seats in the year, which were filled by co-option.

Councillor attendance at meetings



	Actual	Commitment	%
Cllr Birt	1	5	20
Cllr Bloor	18	19	95
Cllr Boyce	4	5	80
Cllr Colwill	2	4	50
Cllr Dunn	15	19	79
Cllr B Forster	12	13	92
Cllr M Forster	12	13	92
Cllr Hall	13	17	76
Cllr Hardwick	24	24	100
Cllr Hill	12	11	109
Cllr Martin	12	16	75
Cllr Meakin	2	2	100
Cllr Mosley	10	15	67
Cllr Plant	18	15	120
Cllr Upton-Loach	11	16	69
Cllr Walter	11	14	79
Totals	177	208	85

COUNCILLORS (as at 28th February 2025)

Councillor	Ward	Address	Tel
Andy Dunn	Great Haywood	19 Essex Drive, Great Haywood ST18 0RL	808154
Beverly Forster	Great Haywood	The Coach House, Mill Lane, Great Haywood ST18 0RJ	07530 921061
Mark Forster	Great Haywood	The Coach House, Mill Lane, Great Haywood ST18 0RJ	07875 534596
Glenn Hall	Great Haywood	Cliffs End, Main Road, Little Haywood ST18 0RJ	07896 774160
Christine Hill	Great Haywood	Park View Farm, Main Road, Little Haywood ST18 0TR	808194
Emily Meakin	Great Haywood	Far Coley Farm; Coley Lane; Little Haywood ST18 0XB	07855 375076
John Mosley	Great Haywood	17 Nursery Way, Great Haywood ST18 0FY	883440
Annette Bloor Vice Chairman)	Little Haywood	12 Manor Farm Road, Little Haywood ST18 0NW	881749
Ben Boyce	Little Haywood	Chase View Cottage, Little Haywood ST18 0TU	07545 327410
Steve Hardwick	Little Haywood	26 Kingfisher Drive, Colwich ST18 0FH	07786 881852
Stuart Martin	Little Haywood	1 Black & White Cottage, Little Haywood ST18 0TX	358774
Wendy Plant (Chairman)	Little Haywood	Brampton, Little Haywood. ST18 0TR	07800 909632
Ellie Upton-Loach	Little Haywood	4 Northcote Close, Little Haywood ST18 0US	07495 145175
Ben Walters	Little Haywood	23 Yelland Walk, Great Haywood St18 0WJ	07791 267783

ADMINISTRATION

The Parish is managed by a full-time Chief Officer, who is also the Proper Officer to the Council and the Responsible Financial Officer. The Council also employs a part-time Deputy Chief Officer/Finance Officer with day-to-day responsibility for the upkeep of the Council's financial records. Both of these Officers hold the Certificate in Local Council Administration. The Chief Officer is a Fellow and the Deputy Chief Officer a Principal of their Professional Body, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC). The Chief Officer is the Staffordshire representative on the Society's National Forum.

The Council also created a new position of Events and Social Media Co-ordinator to organise its events e.g. the summer fete, Christmas lights and the Parish Assembly and to look after the Council's social media and website and assists the Finance Officer. The post holder has passed the Introduction to Local Council Administration and is a member of the SLCC.

In 2024/25 the council employed a further part-time Lengthsman to allow additional groundworks and to keep the JPF toilets and gates open later each day. The Council created the post of Head Lengthsman, working directly to the Chief Officer, to manage the expanded grounds work team.

The Council also employed a part-time cleaner for the Parish Centre and weekend cleaning of the JPF Toilets. In 2024/25, the Council employed 4.19 Full Time Equivalent officials up from 2.84 Full Time Equivalents in 2023/24.

F/T Chief Officer and Responsible Finance Officer

P/T Deputy Chief Officer & Finance Officer

P/T Head Lengthsman

P/T Senior Lengthsman

P/T Events & Social Media Co-ordinator

P/T Lengthsman

P/T Cleaner

JUBILEE PLAYING FIELD

The Parish Council owns and maintains the Jubilee Playing Field complex including the field, toilet block and play areas. The Council's Lengthsmen maintain the site cutting the grass within the children's play area, around the BMX track and Skatepark using walk behind battery powered mowers. The Lengthsmen cut the main field on a weekly basis, usually on a Wednesday, using the battery powered ride-on mower. All the grounds maintenance equipment have interchangeable batteries for added efficiency. The Lengthsmen ensure that the site is kept clear of litter and hazards.



The Council continues to work with a local architect to devise a permanent drainage solution for the front of the site and to design a car park. The architect has also been retained to draw up plans for the refurbishment of the toilet block and changing rooms.

ALLOTMENTS

The Parish Council owns 3.7 acres of allotments, on Coley Lane, which it leases "en-masse" to the Colwich Allotment Association who manage and operate the site. The Council continues to investigate other possible sites for allotments within the Parish ideally within Great Haywood.

PARISH MAINTENANCE

The Parish Council is responsible for cutting various grass areas in the Parish, including some under contract from Staffordshire County Council. These grass verges were maintained by the Council's Lengthsmen who undertook far more cuts than would be the case if the areas remained with the County Council's maintenance teams. The additional Lengthsman has enabled the verges to be cut every 1-2 weeks rather than every 2-3 weeks. The Lengthsmen also maintained the grass outside the Parish Office, Jubilee Playing Field and Emery Drive. The Lengthsmen maintain numerous hedges across the parish which would otherwise be in danger of overgrowing the pavement. These include, amongst others, Coley Lane; Meadow Lane; Abbeyfields; Rockhouse; Oldfields Crescent and Emery Drive.

The Lengthsmen also undertake monthly checks on the Council benches and noticeboards to ensure information is up to date and to identify any remedial works required. In recent years, the Lengthsmen have taken on the additional task of maintaining the Council owned network of Defibrillators.

The Lengthsmen have undertaken the task of clearing the bank along the south side of Coley Lane exposing the natural sandstone bedrock.

Grass Verges

- Main Road/A51 Great Haywood Junction.
- Oldfields Crescent to Shephard Close.
- Essex Drive junction with Main Road.
- Abbeyfields
- Elm Close junction with Main Road.
- Trent Square.
- Rockhouse Drive to The Uplands
- The Butts.
- Meadow Lane junction with Main Road.
- Manor Farm Road junction with Coley Lane.
- Hawkesmore Drive junction with Main Road.



- Haywood Grange junction with Main Road.
- Dobree Close junction with Main Road.
- Main Road/A51 Colwich Junction.
- Kingfisher Drive/A51 junction.

Benches:

- Main Road/A51 junction at Great Haywood
- Little Tixall Lane
- Abbeyfields
- Trent Square bus stop
- Rockhouse Drive
- Jubilee Playing Field
- Wolseley Close
- A513 Lichfield Road bus stop (Shugborough exit)

Noticeboards:

- A51, Wolseley Bridge - next to fuel station.
- Main Road, Colwich – on the wall of the Community Centre.
- Main Road, Little Haywood – Parish Office at junction with St Mary’s Road.
- Main Road, Little Haywood – on the Lamb & Flag public house.
- Jubilee Playing Field – entrance, children’s play area, MUGA.
- Main Road/Trent Close, Great Haywood - on green outside shops.
- Mill Lane, Great Haywood – on wall of Coach House.

Defibrillators:

Great Haywood Sports and Social Club.

Jubilee Playing Field.

Coley Lane Allotments.

Parish Centre.

Colwich and little Haywood Village Hall.

FOOTPATHS

The Parish Council works with local walking groups and in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council to investigate and resolve issues regarding rights of way. The Council is working with Sustainability in Colwich and the Haywoods (SinCH) and Help Nature Thrive.

HIGHWAYS

The Lengthsmen undertake various minor highways works including sweeping the gutters and gullies and cleaning the drain grids to facilitate easier flow of surface water; keeping pavements clear of overgrowing grass/weeds and cleaning road signs.



GREAT HAYWOOD MEMORIAL HALL

The Council continues to work with local residents, the Memorial Hall Committee and the Surgery to investigate the creation of a footpath linking the Memorial Hall car park to the Surgery car park.

NEWSLETTER

Four Newsletters were published by the Council and distributed by the Lengthsmen. The Lengthsman also distributed the Scarecrow, Halloween and Christmas Lights competition entry forms.



PLANNING

The Parish Council is a consultee for planning applications. The Planning Committee meets when a major planning application is received. The Parish Council does not have the power to make a decision on planning applications but can support, object or raise concerns. These are returned to Stafford Borough Council along with any noticeable infringements on planning regulations. The Planning Committee considered the following applications:

- 24/39047/FUL** Robin Beaty Convenience Stores 1-2 Trent Close Great Haywood.
- 24/38960/FUL** Land At Mill Lane Great Haywood.
- 24/39227/FUL** Trubshaw House Main Road Little Haywood
- 24/38963/FUL** Little Haywood Garage Main Road Little Haywood.
- 24/39281/HOU** 7 High Chase Rise, Little Haywood.

INTERNAL EXAMINATION

In his report on the 2023/24 accounts the independent Internal Examiner, Topliss Associates, wrote:

“Following the completion of my work for the above year we are writing to inform the Council that having carried out the year-end review I have been able to sign the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Form 3 (AGAR) without any qualification.”

“We have carried out a review of your website to evaluate its conformance to the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 which is to be viewed as a minimum standard. We confirm your website meets this requirement.”

“We carried out two reviews during the fiscal year and were accorded with full co-operation by your Clerk.”

“We congratulate the Clerk and Assistant [Deputy] Clerk on the quality of paperwork and high level of organisation.”



POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

Administration Policies & Procedures

Policy Manual
 Committees (Members and Terms of Reference)
 Safeguarding
 General Data Protection Regulations
 Standing Orders
 Risk Management Policy
 Training Policy
 Small Grants
 High Consequence Infectious Diseases
 Aims & Values
 Code Of Conduct
 Electronic Communications
 Gifts, Hospitality, Anti-Bribery
 Protocol between Councillors and Officers
 Whistleblowing
 Dignity and Respect
 Anti-Sexual Harassment
 Financial Regulations
 Business Statement
 Investment Policy
 Publication Scheme (Freedom Of Information)
 Media Policy
 CCTV Policy
 Green Infrastructure
 Complaints Procedure
 Vexatious Communications

Staff and Health & Safety Handbooks

Annual Leave
 Equal Opportunities
 Equal Pay
 Sickness Absence
 Travel and Subsistence
 Staff Appraisal
 Capability
 Pay Policy
 Pension Discretions
 Maternity Leave
 Paternity Leave
 Adoption Leave
 Parental Leave
 Time off for Dependents
 Bereavement
 Menopause
 Flexible Working
 Employment Legislation Guide
 Drugs and Alcohol
 Bullying & Harassment
 Disciplinary Policy
 Grievance Policy
 Scheme of Delegation
 Health & Safety Policy
 Display Screen Equipment
 Manual Handling
 Lone Working

The Council reviewed its General policies and Employment policies during its 4 Policy Committee and 4 Employment Committee meetings held throughout the year. Additionally, the Complaints Committee is responsible for reviewing the Complaints and Vexatious Complaints Policy. The Communications Committee managed the Publication Scheme and Media Policy. The Environment Committee undertook a review of the Green Infrastructure Policy and the Leisure Committee reviewed the CCTV Policy



FINANCE

Grants

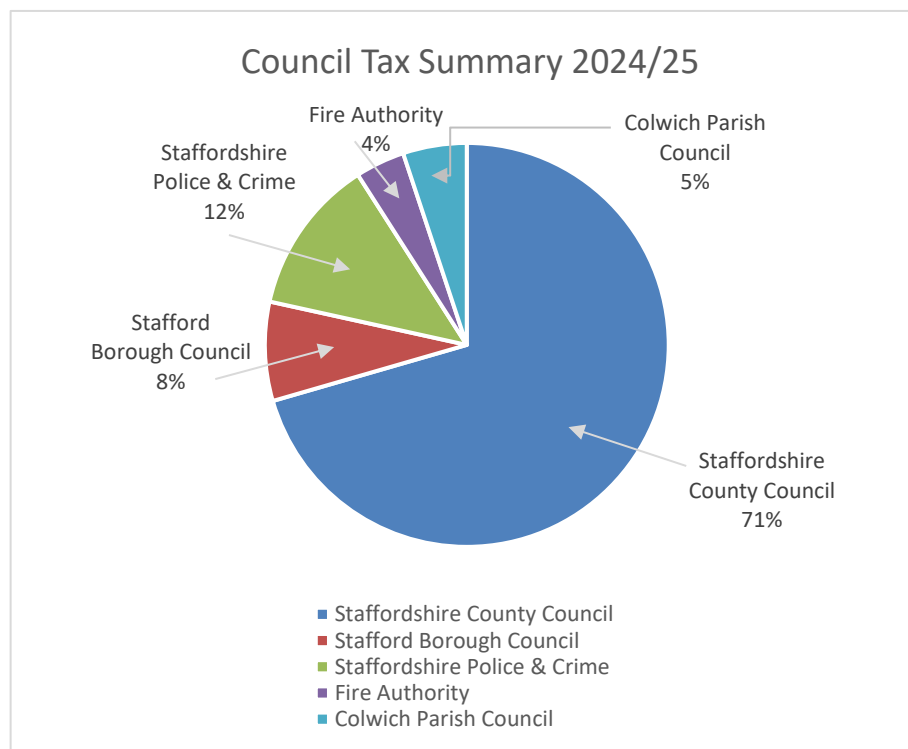
Grants and funding assistance applications are considered by the Full Council, who had a budget of £5,000 for the financial year 2024-25.

During the year, up to 28th February 2025, there was one payment made as follows:

Haywoods Flower and Vegetable Show	£500
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The balance of the grant budget will be carried forward to the financial year 2025/26.

The main form of income for the Parish Council is the precept demand which is included in the council tax from Stafford Borough Council. Stafford Borough Council also makes a payment to the Parish Council (called a concurrent function) every year which is used towards tasks undertaken by the Parish which mirror those that the Borough undertake in Stafford e.g. maintaining the JPF toilets. Stafford Borough Council also passed on the Government's Local Council Tax Support Grant amount of £7,984.



Although it is the Borough Council that charges the council tax, it includes payments for the Police, Fire & Rescue Service, Staffordshire County Council and the Parish Council as well as for the Borough itself.

RESERVES

Reserves held at 31 January 2025 are as follows:

Reserve	Amount	Notes
Road Safety Reserve Speedwatch programme	4,000	<i>To support actions that have come out of the Community</i>
Biodiversity Enhancement Reserve	3,400	<i>Work in progress to develop the biodiversity policy based on reports from Staffs Wildlife Trust</i>
Land conveyance reserve	4,000	<i>To purchase green space from developer</i>
Benches Reserve	2,000	<i>To go towards the repair of benches in the parish</i>
Parish Office Reserve	4,900	<i>To improve the Parish Centre building</i>
Signs & Fences Reserve	1,000	<i>To improve signs and fences in the parish</i>
Play Equipment Repair/Replace	40,953	<i>To repair and replace play equipment at the Playing Field</i>
Sustainability Reserve – Reserve	2,000	<i>To be added to year on year to support moving to green technology e.g., electric grass mowers etc.</i>
MS365 Development Fund	136	
Election Fund	9,000	<i>To pay for elections to the Parish Council</i>
Leisure Reserve	20,000	<i>To cover the potential cost of creating a car park and permanent drainage solution etc. at the Jubilee Playing Fields</i>
Total	91,451	



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2023/2024 / BUDGET SUMMARY 2024/2025

Net expenditure

Description	2023/2024 (audited)	2024/2025 (unaudited to 31 Jan 2025)	2025/2026 (budget)
Staffing	£155,390	£175,524	£225,567
Community Engagement	£2,205	£1,816	£2,900
Events	11,688	£14,187	£16,500
Parish Maintenance	£8,464	£8,757	£5,476
Footpaths	£0	£6,500	£0
Green Infrastructure	£2,886	£1,565	£2,000
Parish Centre	£6,660	£7,579	£12,120
Jubilee Playing Fields	£2,674	£3,637	£4,708
Allotments	£1,671	£1,710	£1,775
Grants (S137 payments)	£1,000	£500	£0
Other administration	£17,013	£20,471	£19,329
Earmarked funds	£381	£0	£0
Leisure	£0	£7,938	£0
TOTAL	£210,032	£243,683	£290,375

Net Income

Description	2023/2024 (audited)	2024/2025 (unaudited to 31 Jan 2025)	2025/2026 (budget)
Precept	£176,226	£214,850	£241,166
Concurrent Function	£3,298	£3,298	£3,298
Local Council Tax Support Govt. Grant	£6,043	£7,984	£10,411
Other Income	£19,333	£15,240	£38,798
TOTAL	£204,900	£241,372	£293,673

	2023/2024 (audited)	2024/2025 (unaudited to 31 Jan 2025)	2024/2025 (budget)
Net Savings/ (Net deficit)	-£5,132	-£2,311	£3,298