

Colwich Parish Council



ANNUAL REPORT 2023 – 2024

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

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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.

In 2023/24 the council employed four members of staff: a full-time Chief Officer, a part-time Deputy Chief Officer and two part-time Lengthsmen.

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 so as to be the final meeting of the calendar year. The Council returned to the full Committee structure which had been suspended through the Covid pandemic period. The Committees include:

Communications (Newsletter and website).

Employment; (Staffing issues and policies).

Environment (Working with Colwich Parish in Bloom; Colwich Allotments Association; Flower & Vegetable Show and Sustainability in Colwich and the Haywoods).

Events (Summer fete and Christmas Lights switch-on and competition, Scarecrow competition).

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),

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

The Youth Council, populated by young people in the parish within school years 6 - 13, suspended through the pandemic, restarted on Monday 27th November 2023. The Youth Council meets at 6:30pm on a Wednesday approximately every 6-8 weeks.

At the Annual Meeting of the Council on 18th May 2023, following the Ordinary Election on 4th May 2023, Cllr Wendy Plant was elected Chairman and Cllr Annette Bloor was elected Vice Chairman.

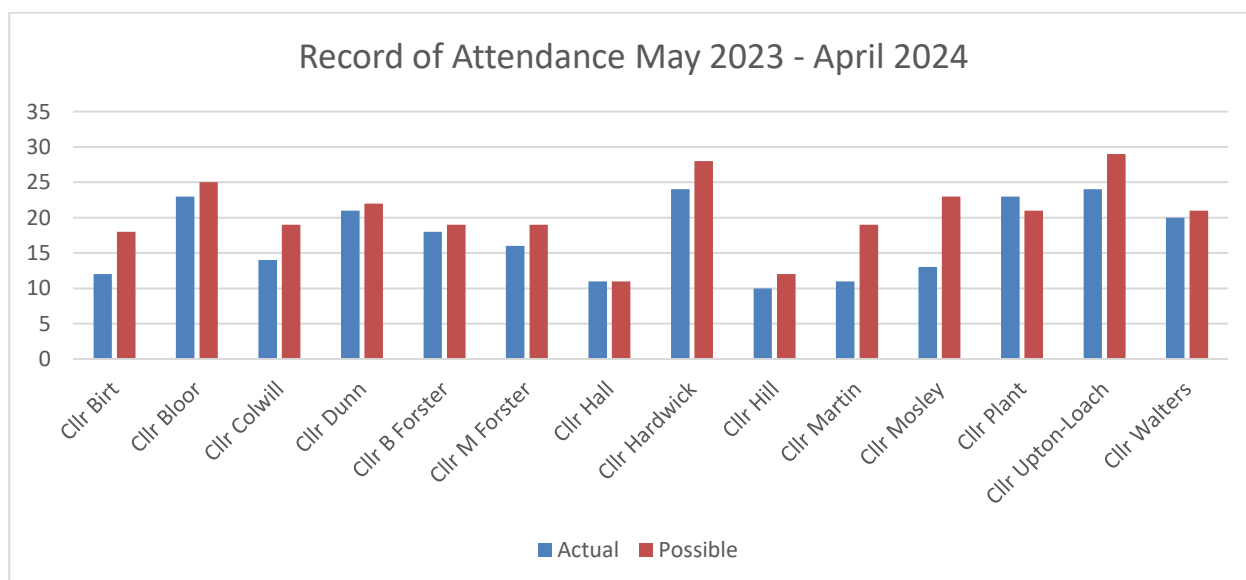
The Parish Centre, from November to March, was opened, as part of the Winter Warmth programme, on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, with tea, coffee and biscuits available.

Councillors*

Councillor	Ward	Address	Tel
Cath Birt	Great Haywood	2, The Weald, Mill Lane, Great Haywood ST18 0RJ	882626
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
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
Lynne Colwill	Little Haywood	2 Forest Close, Little Haywood ST18 0NE	07812 047083
Steve Hardwick	Little Haywood	26 Kingfisher Drive, Colwich ST18 0FH	07786 881852
Stuart Martin	Little Haywood	1 Black & White Cottage, Main Road, Little Haywood ST18 0TX	358774
Wendy Plant (Chairman)	Little Haywood	Brampton, Main Road, Little Haywood. ST18 0TR	881626
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

*As at 31st March 2024

Councillor attendance at meetings



	TOTALS		% attendance
	Actual	Possible*	
Cllr Cath Birt	12	18	67
Cllr Annette Bloor	23	25	92
Cllr Lyn Colwill	14	19	74
Cllr Andy Dunn	21	22	95

Cllr Beverly Forster	18	19	95
Cllr Mark Forster	16	19	84
Cllr Glenn Hall	11	11	100
Cllr Steve Hardwick	24	28	86
Cllr Christine Hill	10	12	83
Cllr Stuart Martin**	11	19	58
Cllr John Mosley	13	23	57
Cllr Wendy Plant	23	21	110
Cllr Ellie Upton-Loach	24	29	83
Cllr Ben Walters	20	21	95
Total	240	286	84
*Possible meetings are Full Council plus other Committee meetings Cllrs agreed to attend and where they have substituted for another Councillor.			
** A dispensation was agreed for all/part of the year due to work commitments.			

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 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 under contract from County Highways. These grass verges are maintained by the Council's Lengthsmen who undertake far more cuts than would be the case if the areas remained with the County Council's maintenance teams. The contracted areas include:

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- 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.
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The Lengthsmen also maintain 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 and Oldfields Crescent. The Council's new hedge, behind the existing one on Emery Drive continues to thrive and will replace the existing one in time providing a cleaner barrier, the existing hedge in mainly ivy and self-seeded trees, and better visibility splay to those exiting the Miller Croft estate.

The Lengthsmen also maintain the Council's:

Benches:

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- 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)
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Noticeboards:

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- 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.

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).

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 competition and Christmas Lights competition entry forms as well as a consultation on improvements to the St Mary's Play area, on behalf of Stafford Borough Council.

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. We responded to:

22/36870/OUT Opposing housing development on Mill Lane, opposite Canalside.

23/37238/FUL Supporting the new visitor centre etc. at Shugborough.

23/37585/FUL Opposing further development on land at Trubshaw House, Little Haywood.

23/37849/FUL Supporting a hospitality business at Far Coley Farm Coley Lane Little Haywood

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, and a part-time Deputy Chief Officer / Finance Officer. 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. The Chief Officer is the Staffordshire representative on the Society's National Forum.

Defibrillators

The Council has purchased and installed five defibrillators across the parish. These are located at the Parish Centre, Jubilee Playing Field, Colwich & Little Haywood Village Hall, Great Haywood Sports and Social Club and the Allotments. All of the defibrillators are registered on the national The Network. If you feel you might require the use of one of the defibrillators then you should call 999 and be guided by the operator.

Small Grants

The Council issued one small grant during the year to the Twinning Association, to prepare a series of visits and to put on a Farewell Dinner for a party of 20 Germans who are coming over here to help celebrate 40 years of Twinning between the Haywoods and Rimbach in south west Germany.



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

The current list of policies used by the Council, copies of which are available on the website, are:

Administration Policies & Procedures

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

Staff and Health & Safety Handbooks

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

The General Policy; Employment and Health and Safety Policies were reviewed in October by the relevant Committees and signed off by Full Council in December. The Financial Regulations policy was reviewed in February. Updated versions have been added to the website. The Youth Council's Constitution and Standing Orders policy documents are also on the website.

FINANCE

Grants

Grants and funding assistance applications are considered by the Full Council, who had a budget of £6,000 for the financial year 2023-24.

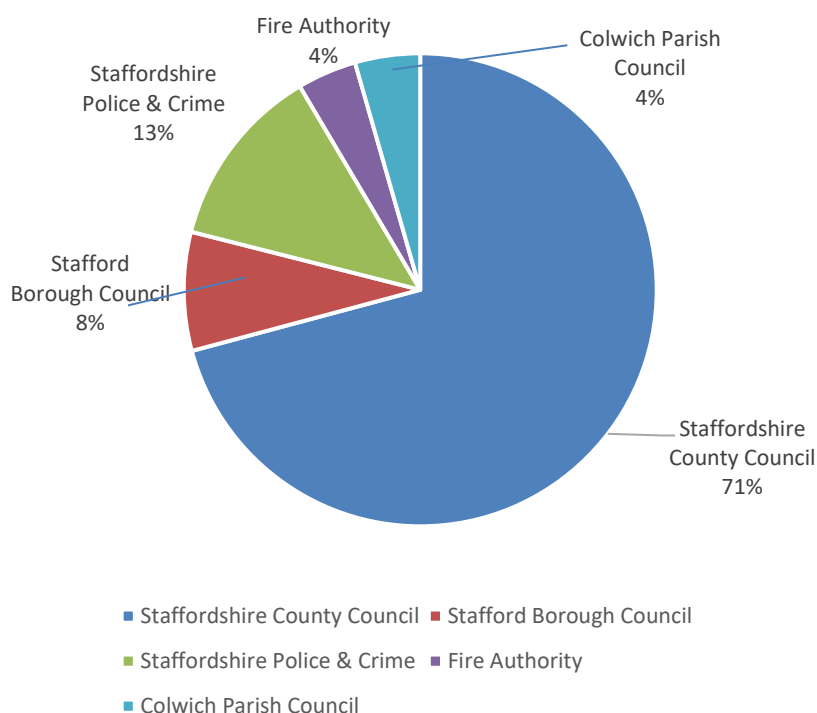
During the year there was one payment made as follows:

Colwich and Haywoods Twinning Association	£1,000
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The balance of the grant budget (£5,000) has been carried forward to the financial year 2024-25.

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

Council Tax Summary 2023/24



toilets. Stafford Borough Council also passed on the Government's Local Council Tax Support Grant amount of £6,043.

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 March 2024 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>
Footpath Capital Reserve	6,000	<i>to repair rights of way footpaths</i>
Surgery Path Reserve	13,300	<i>To assist the installation of a footpath between the Memorial Hall carpark and the doctors' surgery</i>
Land conveyance reserve	4,000	<i>To purchase green space from developer</i>
Roads, pavements & Gullies Reserve	10,000	<i>To pay for cleaning and maintenance of the local roads and gullies</i>
Benches Reserve	500	<i>To go towards the repair of benches in the parish</i>
Defibrillator Reserve	4,550	<i>To purchase and deploy an extra defibrillator in the parish</i>
Parish Office Reserve	4,900	<i>To improve the Parish Centre building</i>
Play Equipment Repair/Replace	34,953	<i>To repair and replace play equipment at the Playing Field</i>
Sustainability Reserve – Reserve	6,000	<i>To be added to year on year to support moving to green technology e.g., electric grass mowers etc.</i>
Election Fund	2,500	<i>To pay for elections to the Parish Council</i>
Leisure Reserve	50,000	<i>To cover the potential cost of creating a car park and permanent drainage solution etc. at the Jubilee Playing Fields</i>
Total	144,103	

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

Net expenditure

Description	2022/2023 (audited)	2023/2024 (unaudited)	2024/2025 (budget)
Staffing	£114,760	£155,390	£209,769
Community Engagement	£3,332	£2,205	£2,900
Events	7,411	11,688	£17,500
Parish Maintenance	£19,012	£8,464	£44,716
Footpaths	£1,531	£0	£6,500
Green Infrastructure	£4,048	£2,886	£5,400
Parish Centre	£5,019	£6,660	£15,870
Jubilee Playing Fields	£39,867	£2,674	£40,481
Allotments	£1,713	£1,671	£1,775
Grants (S137 payments)	£500	£1,000	£5,000
Other administration	£10,093	£17,013	£34,626
Earmarked funds	£0	£381	£0
Leisure	£0	£0	£421,500
TOTAL	£207,286	£210,032	£806,037

Net Income

Description	2022/2023 (audited)	2023/2024 (unaudited)	2024/2025 (budget)
Precept	£165,587	£176,226	£214,850
Concurrent Function	£3,298	£3,298	£3,298
Local Council Tax Support Govt. Grant	£6,043	£6,043	£7,984
Other Income	£12,747	£19,333	£6,600
TOTAL	£187,675	£204,900	£232,732

	2022/2023 (audited)	2023/2024 (unaudited)	2024/2025 (budget)
Net Savings/ (Net deficit)	(£19,611)	(£5,132)	(£573,305)