

Colwich Parish Council



ANNUAL REPORT 2025 – 2026

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

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www.colwichparishcouncil.gov.uk



INTRODUCTION

The parish of Colwich covers the villages of Colwich, Little Haywood, Great Haywood, Farley, Coley, Moreton, Wolseley Bridge and Bishton. The southern boundary is along Bower Lane, Rugeley and Stafford Brook Road in Brindley Heath, 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 is part of the Haywood & Hixon ward of Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council's Trent Valley Division.

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 Councillors who, once elected, represent the entire parish. The next Ordinary Election will be on 6th May 2027.

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 meeting on either a Monday or Thursday evening at 7:30pm:

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).
Neighbourhood Plan	(oversight of the Neighbourhood Plan including its review).
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.

Cllr Wendy Plant was elected Chairman and Cllr Annette Bloor was elected Vice Chairman at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 1st May 2025. The Chairmen and Vice Chairman of Committees were elected at the Annual Meeting. The list of Chairmen and Vice Chairman, as of 28th February 2026, were:

COMMITTEE

Communications
 Complaints
 Employment
 Environment
 Events
 Finance
 Leisure
 Neighbourhood Plan
 Planning
 Policy
 Young People

CHAIRMAN

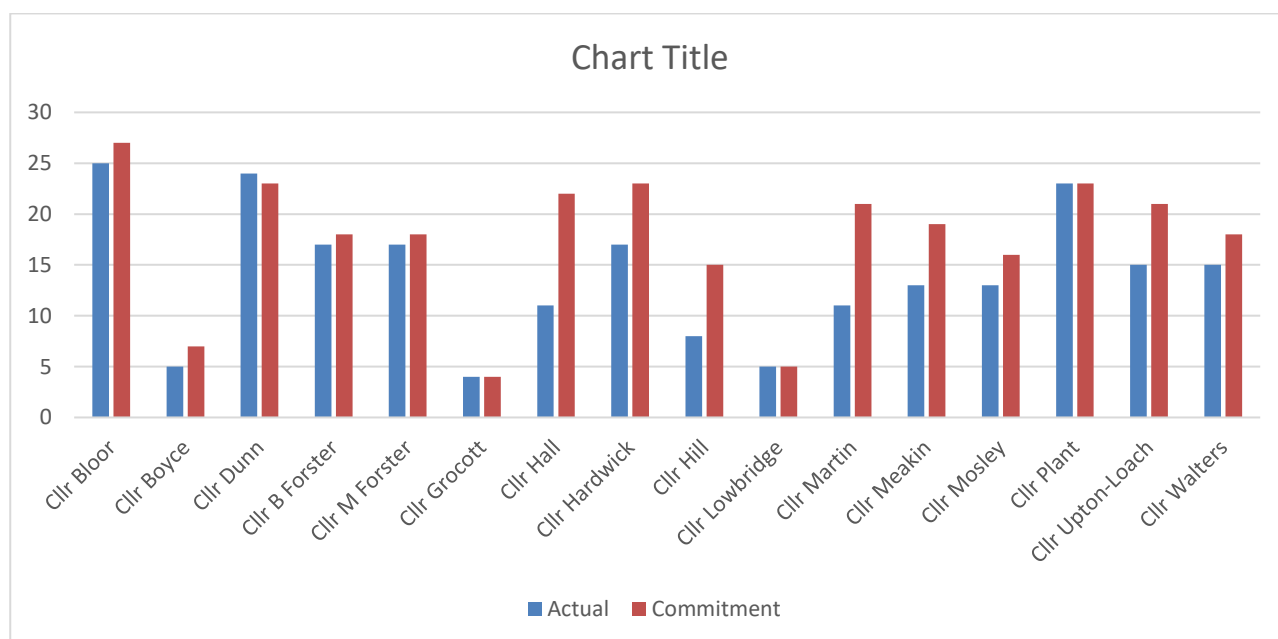
Cllr Hardwick
 Cllr Bloor
 Cllr Bloor
 Cllr Bloor
 Cllr Plant
 Cllr Plant
 Cllr Dunn
 Cllr Plant
 Cllr Bloor
 Cllr Hardwick
 Cllr M Forster

VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Hill
 Cllr B Forster
 Cllr Martin
 Cllr B Forster
 Cllr Walters
 Cllr Dunn
 Cllr Walters
 Cllr Bloor
 Cllr M Forster
 Cllr Plant
 Cllr B Forster

Two Councillors resigned their seats in the year, which were filled by co-option. Due to these resignations, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of some Committees were amended in December's meeting. The November meeting resolved that the Chairman and vice Chairman of the Council should be the Chairman and vice Chairman of the neighbourhood Plan Committee.

Councillor attendance at meetings



	Actual	Commitment	%
Cllr Bloor	25	27	93
Cllr Boyce	5	7	71
Cllr Dunn	24	23	104
Cllr B Forster	17	18	94
Cllr M Forster	17	18	94
Cllr Grocott	4	4	100
Cllr Hall	11	22	50
Cllr Hardwick	17	23	74
Cllr Hill	8	15	53
Cllr Lowbridge	5	5	100
Cllr Martin	11	21	52

Cllr Meakin	13	19	68
Cllr Mosley	13	16	81
Cllr Plant	23	23	100
Cllr Upton-Loach	15	21	71
Cllr Walters	15	18	83
Totals	223	280	80

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
Stephen Grocott	Little Haywood	37 Hillside Drive, Little Haywood ST18 0TU	07540 223969
Steve Hardwick	Little Haywood	26 Kingfisher Drive, Colwich ST18 0FH	07786 881852
Kirstie Lowbridge	Little Haywood	6 Hillview Grove, Little Haywood ST18 0WZ	07729 126540
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
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 employs an 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, draft the quarterly Newsletter and assist the Finance Officer. The post holder has passed the Introduction to Local Council Administration and is a member of the SLCC. The Council employ a part-time cleaner for the Parish Centre

The council employ three part-time Lengthsmen. The team is managed by a Head Lengthsman answering direct to the Chief Officer. The Lengthsmen look after the JPF and Garden of Remembrance. The Lengthsmen also care for the Council's benches, noticeboards and defibrillators. The quarterly newsletter is delivered by the Lengthsmen. The Lengthsmen also maintain highway grass verges across the parish and various hedges under contract to County Highways.

In 2025/26, the Council employed 4.05 Full Time Equivalent officials.

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 a 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 toilets are cleaned daily, including Saturday and Sunday.



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. This work is planned to be completed in 2026.

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 Lengthsman cut the verges every 1-2 weeks beginning in February and continuing until late October. 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 continued to clear overgrown vegetation from the bank along the south side of Coley Lane exposing the natural sandstone bedrock and making the area safer for pedestrians. They have also cut back the hedge at Emery Drive to facilitate a better visibility splay for vehicles exiting the Miller Croft estate.

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.



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.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The Parish Council has begun the process of updating the 2016 Neighbourhood Plan, not least to take account of the additional dwellings required following the 2024 General Election. Part of this process is to consider possible site allocations for new houses in the parish. It is planned to consult on the draft revised Neighbourhood Plan by early 2027.

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.

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
Civility and Respect
Anti-Sexual Harassment
Financial Regulations

Business Statement
Investment Policy
Publication Scheme (Freedom Of Information)
Media Policy
CCTV Policy
Green Infrastructure Plan
Complaints Procedure
Vexatious Communications
Garden of Remembrance Regulations

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
Neo-Natal
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
Child Critical Illness Leave

The Council reviews its General policies and Employment policies during its Policy Committee and 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 new Garden of Remembrance Regulations, whilst 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 2025-26.

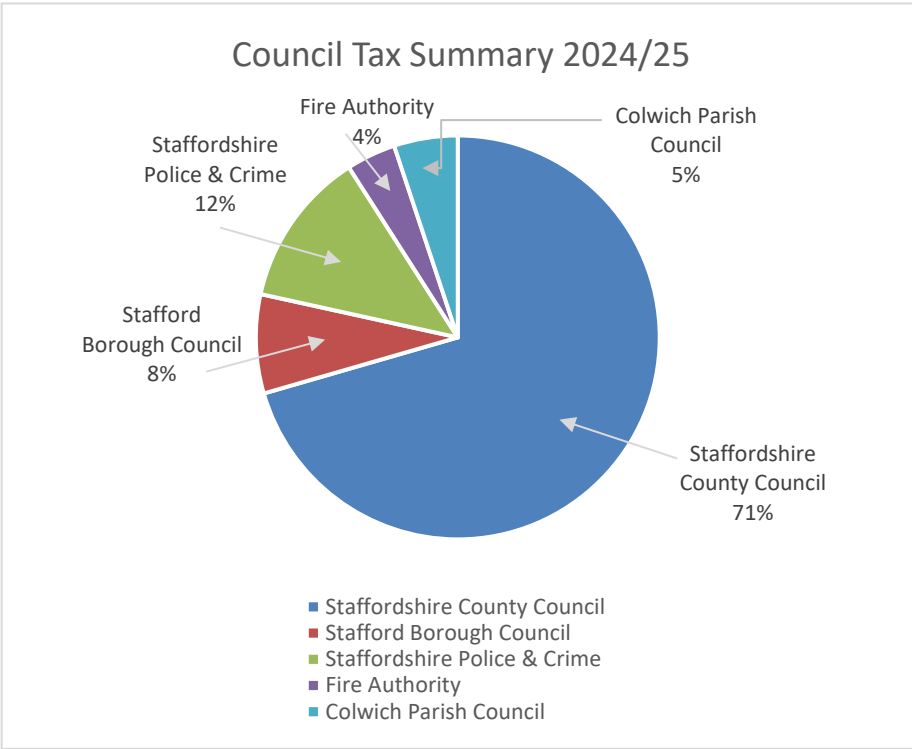
During the year, up to 5th February 2026, the Council agreed the following grants:

Colwich Allotments Association (2024-25 accounting year) Picnic Benches	£360
Great Haywood Tolkien Trail Project Information Boards	£600
Colwich Parish in Bloom Compost	£100
Colwich Parish in Bloom Winter Bedding Plants	£300
Anson Primary School Trim Trail	£1,000
Colwich Parish in Bloom Replacement Planter	£408
Colwich Parish in Bloom Summer Bedding plugs	£480
Queen's Sapphire Jubilee Community Orchard. Lawnmower	£268
Sustainability in Colwich and the Haywoods Shed	£180
The Repair Café Start-up costs	£180

The Grant Programme closed for applications on 5th February 2026.

The balance of the grant budget will be carried forward to the financial year 2026/27.

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 £10,410.98.



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	2024/2025 Budget	2025/2026 Budget	2026/27 Budget
Staffing	£209,769	£225,567	£240,353
Community Engagement	£2,900	£2,900	£2,300
Events	£17,500	£16,500	£12,500
Parish Maintenance	£8,757	£5,476	£5,596
Footpaths	£6,500	£0	£0
Green Infrastructure	£1,565	£2,000	£0
Garden of Remembrance			£4,000
Parish Centre	£7,579	£12,120	£12,160
Jubilee Playing Fields	£3,637	£4,708	£5,538
Allotments	£1,710	£1,775	£2,075
Grants (S137 payments)	£500	£0	£0
Other administration	£20,471	£19,329	£24,085
Earmarked funds	£0	£0	£0
Leisure	£7,938	£0	£5,000
TOTAL	£243,683	£290,375	£313,607

Net Income

Description	2024/2025 (Audited)	2025/2026 (Unaudited Budget)	2026/27 Budget
Precept	£214,850	£241,166	£287,931
Concurrent Function	£3,298	£3,298	£3,298
Local Council Tax Support Govt. Grant	£7,984	£10,411	£12,375.70
Other Income	£15,240	£38,798	£13,300
TOTAL	£241,372	£293,673	£316,905

	2024/2025 (Audited)	2025/2026 (unaudited budget)	2026/27 (Budget)
Net Savings/ (Net deficit)	-£2,311	£3,298	£3,298