



Colton Parish Council

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Clerk: Ms Mandy Lane
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Chairman's Annual Report for 2008/2009

Overview

This last year has been particularly interesting as we have been involved in consultations on the latest initiative to forge closer links between the three tiers of local government. The idea of 'Locality Working' comes from the Government's White Paper: *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, which concerns 'empowering' the community and creating 'Local Area Partnerships' (LAPs). LAP areas will be formed by grouping parishes and will have representation from constituent parish councils, as well as county and district councils and other 'service providers'. Some feel that this could represent just another talking-shop. However, with commitment by all concerned, they ought to become a valuable way for local people to influence how services are provided and delivered in their local area. They should also be a means of making the principal authorities more accountable to local people - recommendations from a LAP are likely to have stronger influence than those of individual parish councils. Colton Parish Council is prepared to enter into the spirit of this initiative and 'give it a go'. Which of the LAP areas is appropriate for us to join is currently under discussion.

Meanwhile, the bread-and-butter work of our Council continues, with highways being on the agenda on frequent occasions. As ever, much of the hard work falls on our new Clerk, Mandy Lane, and as predicted, the amount of paperwork continues to expand. However, with the help of my fellow councillors, Mandy has kept the Council in order over the last year and, as experience is gained and lessons are learned, I believe we have become well equipped to serve our local community and to tackle whatever issues come our way. I look forward to the coming year with renewed interest.

Changes to the Council

We were sorry to lose Tony Atkinson early last year following his resignation as a councillor, due largely to the increasing pressures of a farming life. Ever cheerful and full of local knowledge and wisdom, he had been a useful member of the Council during his relatively brief involvement. At the AGM, we co-opted Brenda Fishwick to replace Tony, and Ken Dean to fill the vacancy left by Sally Baxter's resignation the previous year. So, for most of the last year, we have enjoyed relative stability and maintained a good working relationship.

Activities of the Council

1. Parish Council Lengthsman and Highway Steward.

This year has seen the introduction of the Highway Steward scheme but, with over 50 miles of roadway in the parish, and some atrocious weather, there has also been plenty of work for our Parish Lengthsman, Chris Slater. The new Highway Steward, Adam Tyson, has proved very useful and has brought the power of the County Council to bear where work has been more complex. Our thanks go to Cllr Penny Lovegrove for acting as the contact person for both.

2. Rural Furniture

As a result of last year's survey, we have implemented a programme of upgrading the eight notice boards that we have in the parish.

3. Housing Needs Survey

The Affordable Housing Working Group, under the Chairmanship of Cllr Chris Potts, has had a frustrating year. Although active in seeking suitable sites, and in meeting up with other groups with experience in this area, little progress has been possible. The group will keep an eye on potential opportunities.

4. Community involvement

During the year, the Council has been involved in setting up a community group to produce a new 'Community Plan'. The first Colton Parish Plan, produced in 2003, has often been held up as a good example of its type, and provides an excellent template for our new document. The new plan can

take advantage of expertise from a wide variety of contributors and gives the community a chance to say what needs to be done in the coming few years.

The Council has been diligent in producing four editions of our newsletter this year, hand-delivered to every member of the community, and in maintaining the excellent information resource that is the parish website.

5. Wider liaison and consultation

In common, with many parish councils, we are keen to take advantage of opportunities to work with other groups to achieve collective influence, and to gain information and knowledge which will help us maintain our Quality Parish status. To this end, we have continued to be a member of the pilot Community Board in the Grange and Cartmel area and look forward to becoming part of the proposed Local Area Partnership schemes. In preparation for this, we have become involved with a group of parishes based in the Crake valley, on our western flank. This has been instructive and helpful.

We continue to be involved with the Grizedale Project Consultative Group and thanks are due to Cllr Anne Robinson for representing our interests there.

The Council responded to 20 paper consultations this year, covering topics ranging from mental health service provision to the Lake District National Park 'Local Development Framework'.

6. Planning

Councillors have attended a variety of events and training courses which have helped to better understand what is expected of parish councils by the planning authorities. We have adopted changes in dealing with planning applications to comply with recommended best practice. This year the Council reviewed 36 planning applications (compared with 37 last year). We raised objections to 7 of these, on a variety of issues, and expressed concerns about 3 others.

7. Meetings

The Council held nine scheduled meetings during the year. Member attendance at meetings averaged 87% over the year, and we continue to be helped and supported by Cumbria County Councillor Ted Walsh and SLDC Councillor Colin Davies, to whom we are most grateful. We were pleased to welcome our new Community Police Officer, John Baldwin, to several meetings.

The dates and venues for meetings for 2009/2010 are available and can be viewed on our website (www.coltonparishcouncil.org.uk), on the notice boards, or hard copies can be obtained from the parish clerk. They are also published in the newsletters. Minutes of meetings can also be obtained from the Clerk at a small cost to cover printing, or can be accessed via the website.

Budget for the coming year

We established a small working group (which included two retired accountants) to look at our budget and to recommend a precept for the full Council to consider. It became clear that some aspects of budgeting needed to be updated. Of particular concern was the way the Clerk was being paid so far in arrears, payments being deferred until the following financial year. The group also recommended an increase in the Clerk's paid hours to more fairly reflect the actual time spent on council business. The full council accepted these points. Together with creating a slightly larger contingency, and continuing part-funding of the parish lengthsman scheme, the net result is a sizeable increase in the parish precept of 54%, this year. However, this still represents only about 1% of resident's total Council tax bill and, I believe, provides good value for money. A summary of accounts is attached.

Chairman's thanks

I would like to thank all of the members of Colton Parish Council for their help and much-needed support during the last year and also those residents of the parish who have assisted the Council in its activities. I would particularly wish to thank Roderick Smith and the members of the Bouth Village Green Voluntary Committee for their dedication and hard work.

Cllr Colin Barr
March 2009

Officers of the Council 2008-2009

West Ward : Cllr Colin Barr (Chair); Cllr Tony Atkinson (to May 2008);
Cllr Ian Cunliffe; Cllr Brenda Fishwick (from May 2008)

East Ward: Cllr Peter Harrington; Cllr Chris Potts; Cllr Ken Dean (from May 2008)

Central Ward: Cllr Anne Robinson; Cllr Penny Lovegrove; Cllr John Watson

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Summary of Accounts 2008/2009

<u>Receipts</u>	
Balance brought forward	2509.91
Annual Precept from SLDC	5854.00
Return of VAT	111.56
Lengthsman contribution from CALC	112.33
Lengthsman contribution from CCC	2263.16
Bouth Village Green: income from grants & contributions	650.00
Haverthwaite Parish Council - shared course fee	32.50
NALC Bursary for Clerk CiLCA course	52.50
TOTAL INCOME	<u>11585.96</u>
<u>Payments - summary</u>	
Insurance	493.41
Annual Fees for services:	
Audit Commission fee	141.00
Information Commissioner fee	35.00
Ordnance Survey License Fee	64.33
CALC Subscription	178.50
Bouth Village Green & Playground:	
Electrical work	247.93
H&S Inspections	319.60
Equipment: replacement lawn mower & servicing	626.45
Maintenance & repair	652.38
Lengthsman's salary	3157.00
Clerk's salary	2214.63
Clerk's office expenses & allowances	1067.69
Clerk's travel expenses (inc. for part 07/08)	205.44
Councillors' travel expenses	352.80
Training course & CiLCA registration fees	190.00
Room hire	60.00
Newsletter publishing expenses	149.40
Notice Board repairs	116.00
Website domain name renewal	14.98
Poppy wreath	16.50
Finsthwaite Clock maintenance	125.00
TOTAL PAYMENTS	<u>10428.04</u>
<u>Balance</u>	
Total income	11585.96
Total payments	<u>10428.04</u>
TO CARRY FORWARD	<u>1157.92</u>