



Colton Parish Council

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Chairman's Annual Report for 2016/2017

While I see continuing apathy and disregard afforded to parish councils in general, and a continuing battle to erase the image of the vicar of Dibley from people's preconceptions, we all know that parish councils form the bedrock of local democracy and it is essential to stand firm during difficult times. As I shall make clear in a moment, we are fortunate in having a really good council here in Colton parish, and long may it remain so. The next challenge is to bring the membership back up to full strength.

Changes to the Council

The last year has been one of the most dynamic in terms of membership for some time. Chris Potts stood down after the best part of 20 years on the council, latterly as Vice-chairman; his financial acumen and all round common sense were extremely valuable. Also at the start of the year, Kate Lodge-Brown, just beginning to learn the ropes, moved away and therefore had to resign. Natalie Bibby joined us for a couple of months but realised her work and family commitments prevented an adequate attendance. Similarly, in a year of unprecedented departures, Katherine Patterson also found her life to be too busy and gave up her seat after nearly five years; her contributions on wildlife and environmental sustainability were very helpful. Fortunately, Cllr Oates joined us in September and it is good to see a resident of Lakeside involved with the council again; his professional experience will be invaluable and he has already demonstrated his willingness to share our workload.

The other major change to the council was the resignation in December of our long-standing clerk, Mandy Lane. It has been clear from everything that councillors and residents have said, both in public and during informal conversations, that Mandy made a major contribution to the smooth running of the council and she was central to many of its achievements over the last 10 years. Her ability to engage effectively with a wide range of people and organisations, and her undoubted commitment to the work of the council, made her a valuable asset. To fill Mandy's shoes, we have been fortunate to recruit Karen Birch and her experience and vitality means the council will continue to be very capably supported in the years to come.

Activities of the Council

In such a disruptive year in terms of changes around the table, it has been challenging just to tread water. However, the concept of portfolio-holders is beginning to bear fruit and I believe we are managing our workload more fairly and effectively. During the year, it was confirmed that the council met the qualifications for General Power of Competence, and had qualified as having Foundation Status under the Local Council Awards Scheme. However, it remains unclear what advantages this will bring.

The programme of repairing and replacing our eight notice boards has continued with upgrades at Colton and Lakeside. An improving relationship with Highways staff on the ground has led to a number of longstanding drainage issues being resolved, as well as a reasonable level of road surface maintenance. The nomination of 'Assets of Community Value' (ACVs) has continued with the Manor House at Oxen Park being the latest submission. Together with Satterthwaite PC and others, we have launched a Rural Crime Initiative which has been successful in winning funds from the Police & Crime Commissioner's Community Fund to combat increasing crime problems in the local area.

As ever, largely due to Mike Postle's persistence, more and more residents are benefitting from the ability to access Superfast Broadband; others of us still live in hope. Our lengthsman, Archie Workman, continues to receive accolades from residents for the work he does, clearing drains and managing vegetation, and his personal interests in parish matters have now branched out into aspects of local archaeology, including milk-stands!

Liaison and consultation

We continue to be a well-connected and interactive council. Our clerk has brought a total of 430 items of correspondence to our attention – one more than last year! The council received 13 formal consultations covering topics ranging from the National Grid North West Coast Connections project to local Woodland Management Plans. Each response requires effort and I am grateful to fellow-councillors who helped in our

submissions. The council has produced two editions of its own newsletter this year, hand-delivered to every member of the community. We have also contributed to the three local newsletters every month, and maintain a parish council website. We were represented at 17 external meetings during the year. We continue to run seven Working Groups and we are represented on ten outside bodies.

Planning

This year the council reviewed 36 planning applications. We raised objections to two of these, although both were subsequently granted, and we supported nine. We are building a list of issues that we would like to see supported in the revision of the Local Plan. This will be sent to the LDNPA shortly.

Meetings

The council held nine scheduled meetings during the year and, at the request of local residents, one additional meeting to discuss the future of the Manor House pub in Oxen Park. Member attendance averaged 84% which is higher than was the case last year.

Representations to the principal authorities have been difficult this year with Cllr David Fletcher, both our County and District Councillor, only managing to come to one meeting. In difficult times, we continue to receive good input from Cumbria Police, representatives having attended three meetings and sent reports to five more. Crime reports continue to be focused on wildlife offences, illegal off-roading and farm thefts. Our thanks go in particular to PCSOs Paul Harris and Emma Forrester for their continuing commitment.

We received presentations from representatives of The Deer Initiative (with partners), Coniston & Crake Partnership, John Strutt Conservation Foundation, and Hawkshead First Responders.

Budget for the coming year

Our Finance Working Group, which oversees our formal budgeting procedures, has recommended that there should be no increase in the 2017/18 precept as there is currently a surplus. This has been approved by the full council. A summary of the accounts is attached.

Chairman's thanks

Following David Hamer's first full year as the newly elected Chairman of the Bouth Village Green and Playground Committee, I would like to thank him and his colleagues, for their good work in keeping our only parish council open space in good fettle. I also thank Alan Lovegrove for his continuing voluntary monthly inspections of the same facility. I would like to thank Mike Postle for his excellent work on Broadband, and Bobbie Dobson for carrying out the internal audit. I also thank my fellow councillors for their help and support over the last year and I am sure councillors will join me in thanking the two clerks who have supported us through the last year, Mandy Lane and Karen Birch.

Finally, I am about to stand down from the council after 14 years, including 10 years in the chair. It has been an honour and a privilege to work with such a go-ahead council over a challenging period, with increasing pressures on services and facilities always at the forefront of our thinking. I believe that this exemplary parish council benefits from the quality, professionalism and good humour of its councillors (and clerks) and I would like to record my thanks to all those that I have had the pleasure of working with over this time, particularly the two Vice-Chairs, Chris Potts and Vanessa Champion, both invaluable in terms of their contributions. If I were to pick out one single personal achievement, it is in being married to Mandy and recruiting her to become one of the best clerks in the County!

This council has achieved a lot over this period, and far too many achievements to list here. I believe it will continue to thrive and I wish everyone involved the very best wishes for the future.

Cllr Colin Barr

May 2017

Officers of the Council 2016-2017

West Ward: Cllr Colin Barr (Chair); Cllr Katherine Patterson (resigned); Cllr John Milburn

East Ward: Cllr Chris Potts (resigned); Cllr Vanessa Champion (Vice-chair); Cllr David Hoyle; Cllr Walt Oates

Central Ward: Cllr Lodge-Brown (resigned); Cllr John Watson; Cllr Ken Dean; Cllr Natalie Bibby (resigned)

Clerks: Ms Mandy Lane (resigned); Ms Karen Birch: 3 Home Farm Cottages, Grizedale, Ambleside LA22 0QN
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Summary of Accounts 2016/2017

Balance brought forward	9272
RECEIPTS	
Annual Precept via SLDC	12454
Council Tax Grant	317
Police & Crime Commissioners Grant for Rural Crime Initiative	6259
Bouth Village Fundraising (funds for defibrillators)	2103
VAT return for FY 15/16	181
Good Councillor Course repayments	123
Total Income	21437
PAYMENTS - summary	
Annual Fees for services: CALC Subscription	214
Council Administration Costs:	
Audit fee	156
Information Commissioner fee (Data Protection)	35
Clerk's office supplies and postage	275
Clerk's standard home office allowance	216
Web hosting annual fee & Domain renewal	104
Insurance	454
Room Hire	181
Clerk's Travel	271
Councillors' Travel	0
Computer & printer for Clerk	674
Training course and Council qualification fees (LCAS Registration)	378
Bouth Village Green & Playground RoSPA H&S Annual Inspection & repairs	939
Clerk's salary	6999
PAYE services	58
Notice Board replacement (Oxen Park)	340
Lengthsman services	2588
Sundries purchased by lengthsman (paint, reflectors, etc)	42
Phone box maintenance	24
Finsthwaite Clock Maintenance	174
Charitable donations (Hawkshead 1 st Responders)	150
Community Plan	10
Newsletter Costs	186
Bouth Defib purchased from funds	1650
PCC project expenditure (Rural Crime)	1136
Colton Community Fud	300
Community Plan Projects	410
Total Payments	17964
BALANCE	
Brought forward	9272
+ Total income	21437
- Total payments	17964
Balance carried forward	<u>12745</u>

Note: The balance to carry forward of £12745 is larger than the 10% contingency normally planned for and the projected year-end balance of £5603. The apparent under-spend of £3678 is due to a number of factors, principally: i) Community Plan projects not yet started (£2000). ii) Lengthsman under-spend of £600 due to limited time, iii) Un-presented cheques totalling £210. iv) Notice-board costs less than expected and under-spent by £748.