

COLERNE PARISH COUNCIL

THE PLAN

2013/14 – 2015/16

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Introduction

Welcome to Colerne Parish Council. This is our Plan – it sets out what we are going to do over a rolling three year period. The Plan takes into account the issues facing us and our ability to respond with the resources available. It makes clear there will be choices, and how the Council will decide which to prioritise.

The Plan has been prepared by your parish councillors. It is essentially a planning tool to assist us with the practical decisions we have to take when we meet every month, supported by a review process that helps us, and you, look back on our performance. So, by publishing our Plan that sets out the work we do as a public body we can also help those that live, work or visit the parish to see what is being done on their behalf. However, this Corporate Plan is not a 'Parish Plan', and does not take the place of this comprehensive piece of consultative engagement that highlighted many facets of community life and expectations. Put simply, this Plan sets out the 'what, why, how, and when' at a more specific and operational level.

Context

This is our first Corporate Plan, prepared at a time of austerity across society when all organisations that provide services to the community, be they public, private or voluntary are facing cost pressures and resource restrictions. The emphasis is on value for money, efficiencies, collaboration and accepting that some things just will not get done. Through a planning process though, we can have a shared vision and direction, protect what is important and consider new ways of getting things done.

Although not new, encouraging others to help themselves and to not rely on things being done for them is as important as ever. The aspiration for Wiltshire has been set out elsewhere as 'building stronger and more resilient communities'. That means communities that can help themselves, that have the networks and resources to find local solutions to local problems, and have the means to ensure that wherever possible those that do need services can access them at a time and in a way that is most suitable.

For Colerne, the Parish Council, as the first tier of local government, is uniquely situated to provide the forum for understanding and supporting the needs of this community. It provides advocacy on behalf of its residents, uses linkages to other organisations to bring in services, or directly procures them itself. Liaison with Wiltshire Council happens at all levels. Day-to-day, the Council will seek solutions for the community, looking for skills and volunteers to make improvements to our surroundings or bringing particular neighbourhood issues to local attention to promote a better quality of life for all.

Above all, your Parish Council is here to help, support and encourage. This Plan tells you how.

The Planning Cycle

Planning (and performance) is a continuous process of gathering and assessing information, formulating actions, *doing them*, and then reviewing performance and gathering again.



Of course at key stages one has to pause and reflect, and consider how the plan is evolving – and not just once per year, as the plan is relevant to every significant decision made.

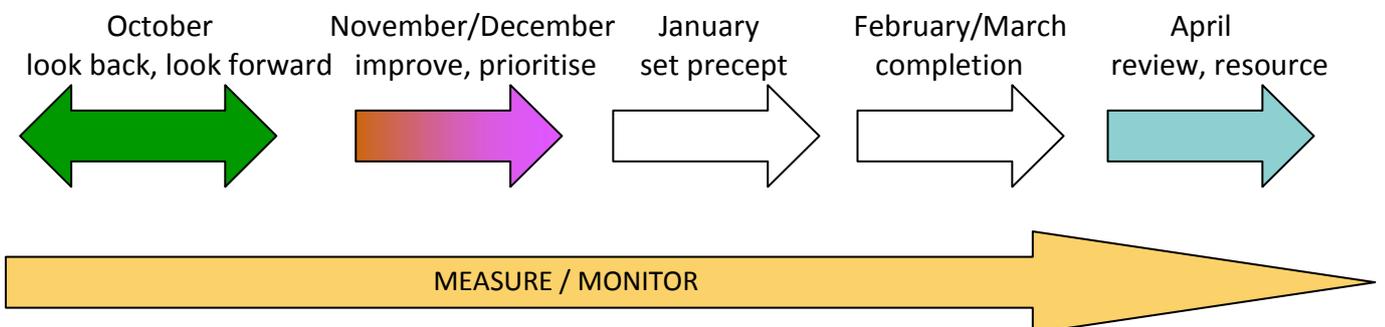
Once specific actions are agreed to deliver this Plan, they are entered on the Rolling Actions Register, which is monitored at every meeting of the Council.

Linkages

This Plan is linked very closely to the allocation of resources – mostly financial, but people’s time and energy too. Our finance is almost entirely derived from the Council Tax system, which follows the financial year April to March. Our precept, or ‘demand’, placed upon the Council Tax system has to be declared every January, in order that Wiltshire Council can calculate the overall tax collection sums for each eligible household and produce the billing required.

Key dates

Therefore, this Plan will be drafted from October in each year, allowing it to evolve as the budget is also prepared, for final precept calculations in January. The Plan cycle will run from April to March, to match the funding available, and will be formally reviewed in April and October to assess achievements in the previous cycle, and progress in the current one.



What is a parish council?

There are two sorts of parishes whose boundaries do not always coincide:

- the Ecclesiastical Parishes centred on an Anglican church with a parochial church council and,
- the Civil Parishes, which are part of local administration, having a parish (or town) council.

A civil parish is an independent local democratic unit for villages, smaller towns, and suburbs of urban areas. Each parish has a Parish (or Town) Meeting consisting of all its local government electors and most (where the electorate exceeds 200) have a Parish or Town Council. Over 13 million people live in such parishes, with just under 3,000 in the parish of Colerne.

The parish council is a small local authority. Its councillors are elected for four years at a time in the same way as for other councils. Bye-elections may be held to fill vacancies occurring between elections, or members may be co-opted onto the Council if no election is called. The council is the corporation of its village or town. In May each year the councillors choose a chairperson from amongst their number. In Colerne parish, there are 13 councillors that make up the Parish Council, which employs a part-time Clerk to manage administration.

What can we do?

Powers and Duties

Parish councils have a number of formal powers, set out in a wide range of legislation. A duty is something that a council must do, a power is something that it may do, if it so decides. A parish council cannot do anything that is not permitted in law.

Parish Councils in Wiltshire have lately become more significant, as District Councils have been removed and because the unitary authority could then seem more remote. The parish councillors know the villages and can now (and increasingly often do) represent their views directly to other authorities like the Unitary Council and its Area Boards, Health Authorities, Police and Fire Authorities. They are entitled to be consulted on planning applications, which include work to listed buildings and on proposals in conservation areas, and are often consulted on such things as schools and roads. They put the parish's case at public inquiries. Recent moves from Government toward greater 'localism' are set to increase the role of Parish Councils even further, especially in the field of development control and planning.

Accountability

You elect its members every four years - the next time will be May 2013 - and you are entitled to go to the annual parish meeting (in May) which is the platform to celebrate the achievements of the community and to engage in the plans for its future. You can also go to every meeting of the Parish Council and meet the Council members, listen to their business and participate in the time especially set aside for that purpose. The accounts are strictly audited every year.

You can find out more about what we do, how we do it, and our meetings on the parish website at www.colerne_pc.gov.uk.

What do we do?

The Parish Council provides a number of direct services to the community, and acts as custodian to a number of assets held in the 'public name'.

Our principle assets are the Old School, Vicarage Lane; Green Lane Recreation Ground home to football teams and public events such as the Jubilee Celebrations, this is a large space - big enough for one football pitch, an Outdoor Gym and Running Track, a BMX track, Basketball practise area, a MUGA Court and two playgrounds for young people (one for juniors and a brand new one for seniors) and is often used by groups or families hiring the Pavilion; Martins Croft Play Ground; Bath Road Allotments (leased from Mr Gibbon), Parish Wellhead and Pond Commons, Wellesley and War Memorial Gardens and Cross Tree. The Council has taken on the responsibility for maintenance, repairs and insurance for these facilities, including the seasonal cutting of the grass by a contractor. Their management is overseen by the Finance, Policy & Assets Management (FPAM) Committee, consisting of a number of councillors.

The Council also rents out the Lower Hall of the Old School to Colerne Old School Playgroup an independent charity with its own trustees and financial supports this charity and the recently launch Community Café. In partnership with neighbouring parishes who act similarly, this Council chooses to make a substantial grant each year to ensure that the Youth Club can continue to offer a minimum level of service to remain viable, whilst it actively seeks additional donations and grants elsewhere.

We also own two bus stops and are custodians for four others (actually owned by Wiltshire Council). We maintain a number of public benches around the parish.

Although Wiltshire Council is the Planning Authority, the Parish Council is consulted on each planning application made in the parish. Councillors consider planning applications at their meetings, and inform Wiltshire Council of their views.

At each meeting of the Council, reports from Councillor Representatives on a variety of village organisations are received, Councillors seek to provide support where necessary, or requested, in order that local groups can continue to thrive. Reports include observations from the local Cotswold Warden on footpaths and other rights of way, and any remedial work that may be required. An annual survey has commenced, from which an action plan is derived, setting out what local volunteer helpers will do, and what Wiltshire Council, as the highways authority, will action themselves. We recently published a leaflet, handed to every household in the parish, setting out everyone's rights and responsibilities for looking after rights of way – vital and historic community assets.

Each meeting considers issues for our communities such as planning (for example, housing or tree felling) speeding and volume of traffic, inappropriate use of rights of way, crime and community safety, facilities for young people, or items of maintenance in the 'public realm' that need reporting to appropriate authorities. The Council can act as advocate for residents, a conduit for communicating information, and will liaise with appropriate departments of other public authorities to ensure that views, comments and necessary actions are dealt with.

What we achieved in the last year

Between April 2012 and March 2013, we have achieved a wide range of improvements, both to the way we work, and to the community we serve:

- Adopted new rules and procedures based on a national model which includes public participation for part of our meetings;
- Established policy statements on the management of health and safety, playgrounds management (and safety inspections) together with equalities and inclusion and a revised complaints policy;
- Conducted a wide-ranging public consultation, at the request of Wiltshire Council, on Housing Needs
- Debated a range of traffic, transport, and road safety issues leading to representation to Wiltshire Council on the diversion of heavy and high-sided lorries;
- Erected new notice boards in the Market Place, Pinewood and at the Recreation Ground
- Established a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, that includes non-council volunteer residents, to consider our approach to new powers in the Localism Act 2011 for parish councils to make local ('neighbourhood') plans controlling building and related infrastructure development in our communities;
- Consolidated the work of the FPAM Committee, adopting recommendations for making this Plan, establishing prudent financial reserves to mitigate unexpected maintenance issues and managing our administrative data safely;
- Approved the payment of grants to Colerne Sea Scouts, Brownies, Community Café, Old School Playgroup, Royal British Legion, Wiltshire Youth Offending Team, Bobby Van and Wildlife Trust
- Tackled the litter problem near the High Street shop, with the provision of a larger capacity bin;
- Effected repairs to items such as litter bins, fencing, street signage, and playground equipment;
- Considered xx planning applications, (more than double the previous year)

What do we want to do next?

The Parish Council has commenced the forward-looking element of the planning cycle In February 2013 (a little later than would be the norm, as the new planning policy takes shape). Councillors meet in seminar session to review a range of local issues that have emerged in recent years and consider the resources available to address them. Many will take a number of years to resolve, or influence (some being beyond the planning horizon of this process) and all will require choices to be made for prioritisation.

The table below sets out the Plan for adoption by the Council, arranged over the next three years:

ISSUE	ACTION	YR1	YR2	YR3
Environment - promoting, protecting and improving our natural environment, encouraging its active enjoyment.	Footpaths			
	- continue annual survey;	√	√	√
	- continue volunteer work parties, and apply for Community Payback Scheme support;	√	√	√
	- introduce nature information boards, viewpoints, planned routes; (potential schools projects)		√	√
	Introduce benches (consider donations)		√	√

	<i>and memorials)</i>			
Transport – reducing reliance on cars, encouraging, promoting cycling, encouraging safer driving, discouraging heavy and high-sided lorries, investigate school bus provision.	Consider how to influence establishment of a community bus project (park & ride); Support Area Board cycle route plan; Continue to lobby Wiltshire Council re lorries; Investigate alternative road-lining scheme when resurfacing commences; Monitor condition of bus shelters & consider refurbishment or provision; Secure 6-monthly use of Speed Indicator Device; Monitor effectiveness of Community Speedwatch; Encourage safer driving education in schools. Consult Wiltshire Council on School Transport	√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √
Street-scene – to engage younger people in designing solutions for their communities, to consider alternative service provision after reductions in service from Wiltshire Council, to encourage sustainable improvements in line with Village Design Statement/Neighbourhood Plan.	Encourage more colour and floral displays in public places; Commission survey by school/s of green spaces suitable for planting; Encourage wider appreciation of community by sympathetic signage; Encourage re-routing of cables from poles to underground; Encourage residents with street frontages to maintain them; Apply for Community Payback Scheme to support footway weeding/cleaning and footpath maintenance.	√ √ √ √ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √
ISSUE	ACTION	YR1	YR2	YR3
Housing – to promote the need for low-cost and social housing.	Establish the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, deploying new powers in the Localism Act 2011;	√		
Facilities & Well-being – Promote and enable accessible socialising and integration, monitor services for the vulnerable, improve communications, access to information and ability to make informed choices, whilst improving well-being, promoting healthy living, the efficient use of spare resources and reducing food-miles.	Encourage existing retailers/licensees to consider diversification; Contact Age UK Wiltshire to learn more about at risk registers Influence wider take up of digital technologies and communications; Encourage provision and take-up of accessible sports and recreational facilities; Approach Schools for wider access to their facilities, and for pupil engagement in projects (eg digital); Encourage a Garden Sharing scheme.	√ √ √ √ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √

<p>Playgrounds and community garden - Maintain, enhance and sustain these community assets for all age groups and as wide a range of abilities as practicable, promote their active use.</p>	<p>Establish plan for future enhancement of junior playground & replacement of some equipment; Provide benches around recreation ground; Refurbish perimeter fencing where required (phased implementation). <i>*design and quote only</i> Publicise improvements in News & Views.</p>	<p>√ √ * √</p>	<p> √</p>	<p> √</p>
<p>Communication and accountability - raise awareness of the Parish Council, its role and access to it, how it consults, and how to influence decisions and raise concerns.</p>	<p>Consider the Council's approachability; Continue publicity in Parish Magazine, newspapers, and promote website; Consult on topical issues of concern; Improve liaison with other village organisations Communicate and consult at May Annual Parish Meetings; Prepare residents for 2013 elections.</p>	<p>√ √ √ √ √</p>	<p>√ √ √</p>	<p>√ √ √ √</p>

Review and performance

This Plan will remain under constant working review, and amendments made as a result of changes to the operating environment.

The Plan having been set in October of each year will be formally reviewed in April, as new resources are applied and then in October at the 6-month stage and to coincide with the mid-term financial statement, whilst also looking forward to the next plan year.

Each specific action arising for the current year is entered onto the Actions Register with performance reviewed at each meeting of the Council, and managed by the Clerk. Any planned activities requiring constant overview are monitored through the agenda setting process. Any risks arising are entered onto the Risk Register, which is reviewed every June and October by the FPAM Committee.

Current editions of The Plan and Risk Register are published on the website.

COMMENTS

If you would like to comment on this Plan or any other matter concerning the Parish Council and its business, including consultations, you may contact us through the Clerk to the Parish Council:

Office of the Parish Clerk
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The parish website is also available, holding our public documentation and links to many other organisations:

www.colerne_pc.gov.uk