

Minutes of the Coaley Annual Assembly held on 16th April 2002 in the Village Hall

Councillors in Attendance: C Dickinson (Chairman), J Hobson, D Billett, L Wilcox, C Prout, R Gage, D Chalmers

Guest speakers: County Councillor Nolder, District Councillor Priest, David Drew MP

APOLOGIES - there were no apologies for absence; 23 parishioners attended the meeting.

MINUTES of the Annual Assembly held on 24th April 2001, having been circulated previously to Councillors, were approved by those present at that meeting. The minutes were then duly signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT The Chairman gave his report on the activities of the Council during the previous year and his report is appended to these minutes as Appendix I.

CLERK'S REPORT The Clerk gave a report on the financial activity of the Council during the previous year and this is appended to these minutes as Appendix II.

REPORT OF COUNCIL'S REPRESENTATIVE ON COALEY SCHOOL GOVERNORS

Councillor Hobson gave a report which is appended to these minutes as Appendix III.

The Chairman introduced DAVID DREW MP.

Mr Drew thanked the Parish Council for giving him the opportunity to speak at the meeting. He advised that as MP he tries to attend at least two or three Parish meetings each year as he feels it is particularly important to know the issues affecting towns and villages in his constituency. It was particularly relevant that he should be at the Coaley Annual Assembly as in two days time he would be welcoming Coaley schoolchildren to Westminster as part of their citizenship programme.

Mr Drew explained that the Government had a fairly active agenda on Parish matters as evidenced by the Rural White Paper and on matters of planning. The intention is to devolve services which should be provided in villages seeing Parish Councils and being uniquely positioned and best able to administer them. He particularly drew attention to farmers being able to sell produce locally and village shops being run on a voluntary basis rather than as a commercial enterprise. He stated that rural parts of the country were disadvantaged on matters of crime and health and indicated that the Government were willing to listen and solve problems as and when they were made aware of them.

Mr Drew concluded by saying that change would always be incremental and that small changes at community level could make a big difference to the way in which people receive services.

Questions were invited from the floor:

District Councillor Priest brought to Mr Drew's attention the situation in Coaley whereby there was under occupancy of property and a number of householders wishing to downsize within the village. Government policy allows for low cost housing to be built outside the village envelope but that there was a lack of supply of open market housing of a suitable size, eg, retirement bungalows. He asked if that was an area where Government might be able to help?

In reply, Mr Drew said he agreed that the planning system was not working well, especially in terms of social housing. He also pointed out that bungalows were not commercially attractive to house builders. He encouraged the Parish Council to produce a Parish Plan which would identify the wishes of the community in terms of housing. Pieces of land could be identified and earmarked specifically for certain types of activity. He foresaw the Parish Plan as becoming part of the planning process.

Councillor Chalmers enquired of the timing to changes to the planning system.

Mr Drew encouraged the Parish Council to proceed to make its views known to the local planning authority. He expressed the view that Housing Associations preferred large scale development in order to make a profit and small communities such as Coaley would lose out. He also pointed out that the tax advantages to landowners in donating land for housing have been removed.

Mrs Randall enquired about the future of British agriculture saying that farm shops were thriving but cheap imports of milk and meat would drive farmers out of business.

Mr Drew explained that the subsidy regime which has been in place since the second world war was now self-defeating and radical reforms were required. New farmers require capital support and there should be a move away from subsidy. Farms will get bigger which means that smaller farms will be absorbed. He also advised that environmental subsidies should be withdrawn suggesting that the landscape will evolve and not just be kept for farming. Diversification into small engineering or information technology businesses is already occurring as more people work from home. Mr Drew offered the view that if farmers and other food processors joined together to form large co-ops they would be able to compete with the supermarkets.

The Chairman thanked Mr Drew for his address and thoughtful insights into the workings of the Parish.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT District Councillor Priest started his report by announcing that he would not be seeking re-election to the post in May due to family commitments. He congratulated Coaley Parish Council on its participation in any new initiative from Stroud District Council which had meant a high level of achievement in areas such as the award of Rural Project Grants. On the matter of housing in Coaley he indicated that the Local Plan covering 2011 and beyond was now in development and that the Parish Council should lobby in advance to ensure that Coaley achieves its goals. During his term of office he had seen the modernisation of Council owned properties in Betworthy and was hopeful of achieving success in terms of play facilities on the green at Betworthy.

On the wider District issues, the supermarket project for Dursley was progressing slowly and, in Stroud, the site designated for a cinema would mean short-term disruption to the bus station. Admission charges had been abolished at the Museum in the Park resulting in a 3 fold increase in the number of visitors. Every property in the District was now part of the kerbside recycling scheme. Government had set extremely challenging targets for recycling which the District Council were committed to meet.

The Chairman thanked District Councillor Priest for all his help during the previous 3 years and wished him well with his ever increasing family.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT County Councillor Nolder urged all those present to attend the polls on 2 May, the date set for local elections. As part of their citizenship programme, Coaley schoolchildren had visited Shire Hall and would shortly visit Stroud District Council at Ebley Mill. County Councillor Nolder was pleased to report that the second flashing wig wag had been selected to receive one, of only two in the County, solar powered activators which would be fitted shortly. She brought news that the County Council traffic manager had agreed to implement the 30mph speed limit throughout Coaley as requested by the Parish Council.

County Councillor Nolder gave an overview of County Council activity during the previous year and spoke particularly of the changes to be implemented following a less than satisfactory OFSTED report into the Education department.

OPEN FORUM

Mrs Butt commented on an item stated in the Clerk's report on Parish Council finance of £2,500 for IT equipment. She felt this was excessive. The Clerk clarified the figures for her and explained that the money was received as part of a Community Capacity Building bid and did not form part of the precept.

Mr Poole enquired of County Councillor Nolder whether the Cabinet system of government meant that she was marginalised from the decision making process by being excluded from the Cabinet. Mrs Nolder did not agree and explained that the committee system had been modernised but was taking a little time to settle down. The Scrutiny committee ensured that member Councillors were not excluded from the decision making process.

Councillor Chalmers asked David Drew MP to highlight Parliamentary issues that might affect Gloucestershire in the forthcoming six months. Mr Drew replied that the Chancellor's budget announced the day following the Assembly was bound to affect Gloucestershire in some way but that, sadly, he had no prior knowledge of the content. He advised that Government was working to revise the system of local government finance which was unfairly biased against authorities in rural areas such as Gloucestershire. He gave two examples: first, ethnic minority population counts skew the way in which grants are given to different parts of the country; second, he highlighted the situation whereby school grants vary by County when the basic costs of running schools of similar sizes are the same. On the subject of schools, he commented that although Government had made more money available for capital projects, locally both Rednock and Archway schools had been unsuccessful in securing access to the additional funding. He felt that in each case the bid procedure was flawed to the detriment of the schools. Mr Drew concluded by saying that the current operation of rural bus services was expensive, unreliable and gave very poor service. He considered that better use could be made of the transport budget and that buses should link to train services.

The Chairman thanked Mr Drew, guest speakers and all those attending.
The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

COALEY PARISH COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2001/2002
AT THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 16/4/02

My report covers the activities of your Parish Council since the Annual Assembly last April.

A report was issued last year by the Countryside Agency headed 'Community Vibrancy'. Community Vibrancy is one of the 15 headline indicators established by the government to measure progress in implementing commitments made in the Rural White Paper over a period of time. Its purpose is to measure, and I quote, 'the percentage of parishes in four categories (vibrant, active, barely active and sleeping) assessed on number of meeting places, voluntary and cultural activities and contested parish elections' unquote. Coaley Parish was classified as 'barely active' and in the next few minutes I hope to disprove the findings of the Countryside Agency.

Your Council met 13 times in the year, the minutes of these meetings covering over 70 pages of closely typed pages of A4 paper. Each Council meeting lasted for an average of two and a half hours. We had an average of 5 parishioners at each meeting, and most of these residents took advantage of the open forum at the beginning of each Council meeting to raise issues or give their opinions on agenda items.

Your Council has discussed 38 planning applications over the year, and visits have been made by councillors to the applicants and the neighbours to hear their views. The Council supported two applications for new dwellings outside the village envelope that went to appeal. Both appeals were lost.

In the last year, two speakers have been invited to Council meetings – in October last year, John Lindsay, the GCC Traffic Manager, advised us on traffic calming and speed limits in Coaley. At our February meeting this year we had the Chief Executive of SDC, David Hagg, speak to us about his thoughts and ideas for the future.

Your Council has been active on highway matters – Elmcote Lane, Corner Lane, Pinnells End Lane and Field Lane have all been resurfaced. Work in Peak Lane has included new drains and resurfacing of the bottom half. We have also agreed with the Highways Dept changes to the signage at Hamshill and Far Green to reflect their inclusion as part of Coaley and not separate villages. We tried and failed to get a street nameplate for Victoria Street. We said goodbye to Brian Addle as our County Councillor on his retirement – he was presented with a watercolour of Watkins Terrace where his family had links. It was painted by Giles Sims.

We supported the launch of both the Village Link bus service as well as the Little Green Bus. Residents in Coaley continue to support both services.

What else has your Council been doing?

The speed limit through the village – after John Lindsay's visit, your Council decided that a 30 mph limit was appropriate from Far Green to the Railway Bridge. GCC are considering our view.

Parish Boundary Review – there is currently an opportunity to look at making changes. Your Council considered that Ashmead residents might want to be in Coaley instead of Cam Parish. Nick Priest carried out a poll of Ashmead residents, which proved inconclusive. However, the residents of Halmore Mill, Mr and Mrs Vatcher, want to be in Coaley. We have made their views known to Cam Parish Council and also SDC.

Coaley School Wildlife Project – your Council has donated £150 towards this project, which will see the creation of a wildlife area as well as the construction of a sensory path.

The Tree Warden – Council receives a quarterly report from Laurence Bryant covering various topics including the laying of the hedge on the Frocester Road boundary of Mr Fayle's field, village tree survey, potential tree planting, and training attended by Laurence.

The Dog Warden – the SDC Dog Warden visited the village on two occasions during the year

The Parish Council website – this is currently under construction by Patrick Roe of Southgate Solutions.

Phase 2 of the Play Area – your Council has secured funding for most of the cost of this project. We received £4000 from Awards for All, £3000 from SDC Rural Project Grant, £3500 from Foundation for Sport and the Arts, £50 from the Coaley Lunch Club and £100 from Coaley Recreation and Tennis Club. Although £500 short of the £13850 required, we have selected Redlynch Ltd as our preferred supplier. Work will start on the 7th May.

Phase 3 of the Play Area – your Council consulted with the teenagers in October last year as to what they wanted. This was a half-pipe for skateboarding, but at a cost of over £15,000, your Council could not support such a scheme. We contacted SDC about Betworthy Green and they had already identified this as a project for this year. In the near future, there will be a public meeting here in Coaley when SDC will consult with the residents of The Betworthy and The Close about the provision of a BMX track. This project will be financed by SDC

Skips and chipping – your Council arranged for 5 skips on Betworthy Green and held 4 chipping events in the Village Hall car park.

Bledisloe Cup – we once again were Highly Commended in our class, and the plaque is on the wall of the Village Hall. We will be entering the competition again this year.

Golden Jubilee Celebrations – your Council has appointed a sub-committee to plan and organise the celebrations on June 1st, 2nd and 3rd June. There is a poster at the back of the hall. Your Council sponsored a Golden Jubilee badge competition – the winners were Megan Sirett, Natasha Sprague and Rosie Porter and their designs will be combined into the badge that will be given to all children in the village. I went to the school last week and presented the winners with their W H Smith tokens, but everyone who entered the competition got a prize in the form of a pack of crayons kindly donated by The Consortium (we are grateful to Dudley George for arranging this).

The Queen's Golden Jubilee Award – following up a suggestion from a resident, your Council decided to give this award annually to an individual or group which has demonstrated unstinting service to the community in the last year. Your Council commissioned the engraving of this piece of Bristol glass. The Council received four nominations, and I have pleasure in announcing the winner for this year – Maureen Wibberley.

Affordable housing – your Council is concerned about the falling numbers at Coaley School, as well as the lack of opportunity for residents in Coaley to downsize to smaller dwellings. With this in mind, we need to determine the need for affordable housing in the village, and we have been talking to SDC about an acceptable Housing Census questionnaire. This questionnaire has been submitted to SDC for approval. Once this happens, we shall be distributing it to all households for completion.

Do I have to say anymore about the 'barely active' parish of Coaley? I am sure you will agree this is so far from the truth it beggars belief! Coaley Parish is an active village to say the least, but I think vibrant is a better description, don't you!

Lastly, there has been an **electoral boundary review**. Coaley is part of a ward with Uley and Nympsfield. This means that we lose our District Councillor, Nick Priest, and also that there will be an election for councillors in Coaley on 2nd May. I can confirm that Roy Gage and Dave Billett have decided not to stand again, but we do have 3 new nominations as replacements. Those putting themselves forward for election on the 2nd May are Laurence Bryant, Derek Poole, Marion Burgess, John Hobson, Duncan Chalmers, Lynette Wilcox, Christopher Prout and myself.

On behalf of all residents, I would like to thank the following for their hard work and support over the last year:

The Councillors: Duncan Chalmers, Dave Billett, Lynette Wilcox, Roy Gage, John Hobson and Christopher Prout.

Our District Councillor, Nick Priest, and our County Councillor, Margaret Nolder.

Our Parish Clerk, Sian Smith

Our Tree Warden, Laurence Bryant

All those on the sub-committee of the Coaley Adventure Playground (Lynette Wilcox, Barbara Tong, Anne Morgan and Sian Smith).

All those on the sub-committee of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations (Clare Kent, Barbara Tong, Barbara Prout, Jean Williams, Pam Sweetland, Sarah Randall and Maureen Wibberley).

All residents who came to a Parish Council meeting over the last year.

All advertisers in the Parish Newsletter, and to Patrick Roe of Southgate Solutions who designs the Newsletter

The 15 distributors of the Parish Newsletter

Our litter picker – Joy John

And anyone else I have missed.

I will take questions on this report during the open forum.

C Dickinson

16 April 2002

FINANCIAL REPORT COALEY PARISH COUNCIL 2001/02**Amount precepted was £10,500****Other income has been received from:**

Allotment rents	£177.50	
Use of Recreation Ground by CRFC & Tennis Club	£301.00	
Wayleaves and interest on deposits	£ 83.15	NSB interest still to come
Grants received	£12,500.00	
Advertising revenue from newsletter	£622.00	
Other donations (mainly for CAP)	£1,743.60	
VAT reclaimed	£2,046.29	
plus balance brought forward of	£6,826.47	
gave a total income of	£34,800.01	

This has been spent as follows:

Maintaining the Recreation Ground, Coronation Oak, football pitch, bus shelters and noticeboards	£1,215.20
Work carried out on childrens play area (Coaley Canyon)	£7,286.42
Hedgecutting on all 3 allotments	£100.00
Street cleaning/litter collection (9 months)	£90.00
Administration costs, ie cost of maintaining Clerk and Council office	£4,032.21
Repayment of loan for new carpark at rear of village hall	£4,501.50
Training and books	£133.00
Subscriptions for insurance, audit, County Association, SLCC	£785.81
Parish Newsletter	£650.00
Hire of Jubilee Room for meetings and main Hall for events	£221.00
Donations made by Parish Council ie, LGB, CoSPA, School Wildlife project, Tennis Club for EB status	£1,034.60
gives a total annual expenditure of	£20,050 which with VAT =
	£21,616

The balance carried forward to 2002/03 is £13,184 of which £10,996 is reserved for:

CAP Phases II & III	£6,705	Forthcoming Election	£285
Loan repayment car park	£359	Burial Fund	£800
Footpath noticeboard	£347	IT equipment	£2,500

So, those are the figures for last year.

I would like to just briefly mention this year because I have received several telephone calls from residents understandably concerned about the 32% increase in the amount precepted by the Parish Council for this year.

The percentage figure does indeed give cause for concern until you look at the actual amounts in terms of £'s shillings and pence. The actual increase over last year is £3,330 and the majority of that is for repayment of the loan from the Public Works Loan Board used to resurface the rear car park. Once the sum of £3,100 has been paid this year (September and March) a further £3,100 will become due the following year and then the loan is paid.

At the time of setting the precept, October last year, the Parish Council gave thought to projects for this year and the following sums have been included:

Golden Jubilee Celebrations	£200	Housing Needs Survey	£100
Parish Plan	£250	Scorcher Roadshow 2002	£100
Parish Map	£75	Signage	£300
Noticeboard	£200		

These amount to £1,225.

However, we have now received a grant for carrying out the Housing Needs Survey so that sum will not be spent.

The Parish Council has to pay a contribution to the District Council for holding elections. It is a matter of good housekeeping to always precept a small amount each year to cover this cost. The sum held in election reserves is £285. Last year it became known that there would be an election held this May, a year earlier than normal. The Council was therefore short by £315 of the anticipated contribution of £600. The shortfall was therefore included in the precept. I am pleased to say that not all this sum will now be spent as the District Council has made provision for reducing the contribution requested from Parishes.

Finally, I will give you some figures now that will surprise you:

The precept last year was £10,500 which equates to an amount of 61p per week for a property in Council Tax band D

The precept this year is £13,830 which is 81p per week for a Band D property

Not quite so alarming now, I trust.

Sian Smith

16 April 2002

Report of the Council's Representative on the Board of Governors of Coaley C of E Primary School – 16th April 2002

This has been an up and down year for the school. In the summer term of 2001 we were forced to make one of the teachers redundant, due to financial constraints. At the same time plans were being drawn up for new, permanent classrooms to replace the old terrapins. Having survived the trauma of redundancy the school was then faced with the prolonged loss of one of the remaining teachers due to illness. This has dented the school's finances due to the high cost of employing supply teachers.

The plans for the new build are progressing well and work should be completed during the summer vacation, although some disruption will be caused before that with the need to remove two of the terrapins. One terrapin, which was originally bought by FOCS, will be retained for occasional use when classes need to split for project work.

As part of the curriculum work on citizenship, a school council has been formed and is working well with the members showing a high degree of organisation, even the headmistress can only speak when the chairman allows. One of the early initiatives from the school council is the restoration of the wildlife area and pond, a project I was first involved with as a parent some 12 years ago. Last weekend a working party renewed the pond liner, the old liner having been vandalised some years ago. During the replacement the working party found, to their surprise, that the pond had been home to a colony of great crested newts, we hope they will like their new home. More work will be required to make the area safe for pupils and to provide tables, etc for outdoor classes.

John Hobson
16 April 2002