

Parish Council Briefing

Parish Clerk, John Willcox, rounds up the PC’s activity in September

Since the last report of the Parish Council, the Council has met on two occasions; the 6th November 2023 and the 8th January 2024.

At these meetings, three planning applications were considered; a retrospective change of use from residential and agricultural to dog boarding; day care, grooming, storage and associated car parking at Malthouse Farm. An application for internal alterations to kitchen, utility room and pantry at Sturford Mead. Finally, some adaptation and demolition of existing structures, installation of new animal enclosure fencing, associated works at Longleat Safari and Adventure Park.

The Parish Council agreed that they would have no objection to any of these applications albeit they registered their disappointment at the receipt of another retrospective application for a ‘development’ in the village that obviously should have been the subject of an application at the outset.

Finance

Following the September meeting where the precept had been discussed, a draft budget had been prepared for 2024/2025 and following detailed discussion it was unanimously agreed that the precept requested for 2024/2025 should be the same as had been requested for the current financial year (2023/2024). The budget contains provision for, amongst other demands, the PC to continue the work being done on improving the rights of way network throughout the Parish, to provide the matching funding for the various street scene improvements that are being sought, to fund a start on the Draft Emergency Plan for the parish that has been considered and to provide some direct support to the Corsey Reading Room..

Streetscene

The PC continues to be vocal both about the various improvements that are being sought and the maintenance issues that need to be addressed. The PC are grateful for the support provided by our County Councillor, Bill Parks who always works hard on our behalf, but this does not stop us shouting our corner when the need arises whilst at the same time recognising the needs of the rest of area for support too

The Three Villages Group met on the 15th December 2023 and it was felt to be the most positive meeting to date.

Villagers will have become aware that the recent extreme weather has lead to a number of issues with flooding and land slips on the southern side of the A362. Thanks are due to staff of the Longleat Estate who have cleared these, sometimes within hours of them being reported. It was agreed that the PC should try and convene a meeting with both Longleat and Wiltshire Council to discuss the increasing problems of landslip and flooding due to climate change. We have been very lucky in Corsley that we have not suffered house flooding, unlike other parishes, but we still need to work on being more prepared for future events so that we do not see this moving forward.

As previously reported, the agreement regarding the Wild Flower Meadow is due for renewal . At the September meeting it was agreed in principle that the agreement should be renewed but it was felt by both parties that the agreement should be revisited to ensure that it was fit for purpose for another period of five years, or for however long was felt appropriate. The Vice Chair of the PC agreed to lead a group to consider and thereafter make a recommendation to the PC. It was further agreed that a maintenance schedule for the remainder of the land making up the Old School Playing Field (the orchard) should be drawn up, which has been done.

The Parish Council has been reviewing its procedures and practices and has agreed a number of additions to the way it operates; including a formal complaints procedure and a more formal way of running our meetings.

Next meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Parish Council is Monday 11th March. We welcome all visitors!

Meetings to be held in the Lower Room at Corsley Reading Room and will begin at 7 pm

*John Willcox
Parish Council Clerk*

Hazardous Hedges

Do you know your responsibilities to keep hedges cut back on roadsides?

Given that the majority of discussions we seem to have at the Corsley Parish Council meetings are about hedges growing into roads and causing damage to cars I thought it would be worthwhile putting an article in The Bridge for everyone to understand their responsibilities as residents of Corsley. Councillor David Ball has taken some excellent photos of good and bad examples.

Overgrown hedges next to footpaths and roads pose a real hazard to people who are disabled or who are visually impaired and young children or other pedestrians who risk injury or damage to their faces or clothing from thorns and branches. If the pavement (footway) is narrow or the obstruction is excessive, they may be forced into the road. This is particularly dangerous for wheelchair users or for people pushing a pram or buggy and, in Corsley’s case, for horse riders, cyclists and dog walkers. On junctions and bends overgrown hedges may obstruct sight lines and the clear view of motorists.

We receive a lot of messages from people throughout the village about overgrown hedges and the difficulties in getting down the lanes asking if we or Wiltshire Council are going to sort it out; so we thought we would let you know exactly what the rules are and who needs to do what.

Firstly, it is the land owners or occupiers responsibility to manage their hedges. This includes anyone renting a property. Even if your tenancy agreement states that the landlord is responsible, you would be required to contact him/her and ensure that pruning is carried out as soon as possible. You will see many farmers currently trimming back hedges. It is normal for hedges to be cut back during the winter so it does not interfere with nesting birds.

However, frustratingly, hedges grow most during the summer when you are typically not allowed to prune them because of nesting birds. However you are allowed to cut the hedge during spring and summer if the hedge has grown vigorously and overhangs a highway, road or footpath over which there is a public or private right of way. In this case, you should check for nesting birds then cut back until you achieve the required visibility.

If you don’t maintain your hedge you may get a letter from the Council stating that it’s an offence under the Highways Act 1980 to allow trees, hedges, shrubs and so on to obstruct the highway. The Council will, after an initial informal request, serve a 21-day notice on you, the occupier, to cut back the offending vegetation. If you do not comply with the notice, the Council may carry out the work itself and recover its costs in doing so from you, through the courts if necessary.

The big question is always how far back does one cut the hedge. The answer is, enough to allow good visibility to secure use of the path/ highway.

Here are a few examples of good and bad hedge maintenance which we hope will help.



Hedge cut back nicely to the edge of the road, excellent visibility for users



Hedge overhanging road and impairing visibility around the corner



Branches hanging in the middle of the road impairing visibility and potentially scratching cars, vans, etc