

OLD CLEEVE PARISH COUNCIL PARISH MAGAZINE

The Parish Council were saddened to learn of the untimely death of Anthony Trollope-Bellew, the former Leader of West Somerset Council. He always supported the Parish Council when we raised issues at the [now defunct] Dunster Panel and helped to champion the saving of the Blue Anchor Community Toilets. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this sad time.

As mentioned last month, our budget setting process for 2023/24 is now underway and we hope to have concluded this by the time you read this article. Further details will be provided next month. Like many of you, the Parish Council is seeing increases in costs for many of the services we provide or use. Thanks to good stewardship and planning, we have so far been able to absorb these within our existing budget.

One area where we have seen a significant cost increase is for the electricity needed to power the floodlights at the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) in Washford Recreation Ground. To try and ease the burden and to reduce our carbon footprint, we have explored converting these floodlights to LED. Unfortunately, the cost of doing this is currently prohibitive and it would take many years for the costs to be recovered by savings in electricity.

The floodlights are intended to allow groups or clubs to use the MUGA during darkness but as they can be easily switched on by the user, we know that they are also used for other purposes or for illicit gatherings. At the moment, we are not aware of any groups or clubs who need to use the lights, so we have therefore taken the decision to turn them off until further notice. This will not save all costs as the daily standing charge will still need to be paid but it should reduce costs in the short term. If you, or if you know of anyone who needs to use the floodlights, please contact our Clerk at info@oldcleeveparishcouncil.org so that arrangements can be made. We will review the long term future of the floodlights after the Winter.

As a Council, we have relatively few assets. Unlike many other local Councils, we do not own or operate buildings or halls. Those assets we do have include Washford Recreation Ground, Old Cleeve War Memorial, three defibrillators and numerous seats, bus shelters and notice boards around the Parish. These are all regularly inspected and we hope, well maintained. Work has now been completed on our bus shelter repainting and these now look much smarter.

Highway and footpath maintenance, or rather lack of it, continues to be a concern for many parishioners particularly at this time of year. Many lanes around the Parish are in a poor state with surface detritus, uncut hedges, potholes and blocked drains. When we become aware of particular concerns, we do report these – as any individual can also do - to the relevant authority for necessary action. We have also asked for the ford at Lower Bilbrook Lane to be re-levelled as it is becoming more difficult for vehicles to use. We do not currently have any powers to do these types of maintenance works ourselves but this may change when the Unitary Authority comes into existence. We are told there are budgetary pressures even before it comes into being. We therefore await developments on that with interest and some trepidation!

The County Council's Trading Standards Service have recently provided an update on Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) and they have asked us to make you aware that from 7th November 2022, it will be a legal requirement for all bird keepers to keep their birds housed and to follow stringent biosecurity measures to protect their flocks. This applies whether keepers have commercial flocks or just a few birds in a backyard or garden. Full details of what is required can be found on the government website - www.gov.uk/bird-flu

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Everyone is welcome to attend our Parish Council meetings. The next meeting is on Monday 12th December in Washford Memorial Hall at 7.00pm. Full details will be published on our notice boards and our website: www.oldcleeveparishcouncil.org nearer the time.

Ian Duncan
Chair, Old Cleeve Parish Council