



2025 – 2026 Annual Report

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CHAIR'S REMARKS



As Chair, it is always a privilege to reflect on the work of the council and the community we serve. Over the past year we have seen both challenges and achievements, and it is worth taking a moment to recognise the efforts of everyone who contributes to the life of our town.

I am a fan of the BBC series *Villages by the Sea*, presented by Ben Robinson, which explores the history of coastal communities around the United Kingdom. One of the themes that comes through clearly is that while landscapes and industries shape a place, it is ultimately the people — and their resilience over time — that define it.

That observation feels particularly relevant to Colehill. Many residents care deeply about the place where they live. They value its character and environment, and they are understandably protective of what remains of the Green Belt and their immediate environment. Because of this, proposals for change can sometimes generate strong views.

When residents come to speak at our meetings, many are stepping outside their comfort zone. Public speaking is not something most people do regularly, and council meetings can feel formal and unfamiliar. Often residents have spent a great deal of time preparing what they want to say. It is therefore important that we listen respectfully, even when we may not agree with the points being made. Maintaining that respectful atmosphere is essential if we are to retain public confidence in the council and in our decision-making.

Looking ahead, the council will continue to face a number of challenges particularly around the Local Plan. Addressing those challenges will require us to work together constructively and to remain focused on our shared objective of serving the community.

I would like to thank the Clerk and her Deputy. They deal with a constant flow of enquiries from residents and work extremely hard behind the scenes to ensure that meetings, events and day-to-day operations run smoothly. Their work is very much appreciated.

I would also like to thank fellow councillors for the time and commitment they give to the role and their support to me as Chair. It is not always an easy responsibility. I am particularly grateful to those councillors who chair committees or represent the council on external organisations and boards. However, every councillor contributes to the work of the council, and its effectiveness depends on that collective effort.

Over the past year there have been several positive developments.

One recent success has been the cricket club initiative, which has attracted an encouraging level of interest and participation from the local community.

Our VE Day/Lamps of Peace event was also a very moving occasion and demonstrated how community events can bring residents together to reflect and commemorate our shared history. The work of Emma to inscribe the name of every serviceman on a candle was a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made. The involvement of local schoolchildren and The Reef youth club added to the sense of occasion.

In September 2025 the council achieved the **Silver Local Council Award**. This is an important milestone. It recognises strong governance, transparency, community engagement and a commitment to continuous improvement. It demonstrates that the council operates well beyond the basic legal requirements in the way it serves residents and manages public resources.

Another significant step was the decision in December 2025 to rebrand from **Colehill Parish Council** to **Colehill Town Council**. This better reflects the size and character of the community and helps reinforce Colehill's identity as a town. It also supports our aim of maintaining the important Green Belt separation between Colehill and neighbouring areas such as Wimborne and Ferndown, while strengthening our ability to have a voice on our future.

The council has also continued to invest in community facilities and public spaces. Improvements have been made to areas such as Oliver's Park, including the installation of new play equipment and the Fields in Trust plaque. We have also funded improvements to paths and benches and have used the Community Infrastructure Levy funding to support projects that benefit residents. Our Dales Drive Telephone Box library has been a great success.

Community engagement remains a priority. During the year we have held councillor drop-in sessions, supported community and seasonal events, and worked with local youth groups and conservation initiatives, including litter-picking activities and our 'bulbs for verges' initiative.

Finally, the council continues to support local organisations through grants and other assistance. This includes community groups, charities and local events, as well as valued facilities such as the village hall and the library.

All of this reflects the continuing commitment of the council to supporting and strengthening the community we serve. I would like to thank councillors, staff, volunteers and residents for their contributions over the past year, and I look forward to continuing that work together in the year ahead.

Thank you.

COUNCIL DETAILS

Members

As at 31st March 2026, the Council is constituted as follows:

Cllr Clare Davison (*Chair*)
Cllr Nigel Bridle
Cllr Ann Edwards
Cllr Leslie Gibson (*Finance and General Purposes Committee Chair*)
Cllr KD Johnson (*Vice Chair*)
Cllr Mark Keniston
Cllr Andrew Todd (*Finance and General Purposes Committee Vice Chair*)
Cllr Emma Urquhart
Cllr Patricia Gray
Cllr Susan Cowsill (*Highways, Planning and the Environment Committee Vice Chair*)
Cllr Carol Butter
Cllr Richard Palmer (*Highways, Planning and the Environment Committee Chair*)

As at 31st March 2026, the Council has 4 vacancies and has continued efforts to recruit new councillors through campaigns on its website and social media. The Council has introduced 'Councillor drop in sessions' which are advertised both as an opportunity for residents to discuss matters with councillors and to find out more about joining the Council.

Town Council Conversion

During 2025 the Council launched a public consultation as to whether it should convert from a Parish Council to a Town Council. 97.5% of respondents were in favour of conversion, and the Council resolved to convert on 9th December.

A Parish and Town Council have the same statutory powers and can provide the same services. The main reason for making the change, is to take advantage of the increased protection provided to Towns under the Green Belt rules. The name change is also expected to increase our status and recognition, and may make it easier to attract new facilities.

Meetings

Full Council meetings and Committee meetings are held on Tuesday evenings in the Betty Webster committee room, Colehill Village Hall. Full Council meetings take place every other month. Meetings of the Highways, Plans & the Environment Committee are approximately every 5 weeks and meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee are approximately every 6 to 7 weeks.

All agendas are published on the Council's website and on a local noticeboard. The Council's website includes a full list of meeting dates for the year along with contact details for the Clerk should a member of the public wish to make representations at a meeting. The full calendar of meeting dates is also published on 7 local noticeboards.

Staff & administration

The Council has 1 full time member of staff, Zoe Caddy, Clerk to the Council and one part time Assistant Clerk, Emma Cross.

The Clerk is home based with both landline and mobile numbers published on the Council's website on which she is contactable from 8.30 to 12.30pm Monday to Friday. The Assistant Clerk works at The Reef Community Centre.

Councillor responsibilities

To ensure the effective running of the Council, the Council allocates a number of individual councillors / Officers to specific duties. Individuals in these positions report any issues or concerns back to the Council. This year the roles were appointed to the following councillors:

Rights of Way Liaison Officer	Cllr Clare Davison Deputy – Cllr KD Johnson
Tree Warden	Cllr Nigel Bridle Deputy – Cllr Emma Urquhart
Traveller Communities Liaison Officer	Cllr Nigel Bridle
Historic Environment Liaison Officer	Cllr Nigel Bridle
School Liaison Representative	Cllr Emma Urquhart
Press Officer	Cllr Leslie Gibson
Editorial Board	Cllr Leslie Gibson Cllr KD Johnson Cllr Emma Urquhart Cllr Clare Davison Clerk
Speed Indicator Device Volunteers	Cllr KD Johnson Cllr Leslie Gibson
St Michael's Dirt Inspectors	Cllr Clare Davison Cllr Susan Cowsill Cllr Patricia Grey
Oliver's Park Play Area Inspectors	Cllr KD Johnson Cllr Leslie Gibson Cllr Susan Cowsill Cllr Patricia Grey Clerk
Bench Inspectors	Cllr KD Johnson Cllr Richard Palmer Cllr Clare Davison Cllr Leslie Gibson Cllr Susan Cowsill Cllr Andy Todd
Grit bin Inspectors	Cllr Nigel Bridle Cllr Leslie Gibson Cllr KD Johnson Cllr Susan Cowsill Cllr Mark Keniston Cllr Andy Todd Cllr Richard Palmer

Website & social media

The Council has a website (www.colehill.gov.uk) and a Facebook page which are maintained and updated by the Clerk and Cllr Leslie Gibson in his capacity as Press Officer. The website and Facebook page are used to update residents on the Council's activities and to provide key information about the town.

Councillor details

Each councillor has a profile page on the Council website which includes their Council email address and a telephone/home address where they have consented for such details to be publicised. Councillor profile pages also include a link to their register of interests available on the Dorset Council website.

Policies & Procedures

Copies of the Council's policies are published on the Council's website and are reviewed in accordance with a review cycle. Policy reviews are led by Cllr KD Johnson and Cllr Leslie Gibson who make recommendations to the Council or reviewing sub-committee on any amendments.

The Council currently maintains 48 governance documents which are reviewed annually. This year the Council introduced a new IT Policy to set out expectations and guidance on our use of IT.

Local Council Award Scheme

In September 2025 the Council was granted the Silver Award in the National Association of Local Councils Award Scheme.

Applying for the award involved reviewing and making amendments to various policies and procedures as well as gathering evidence to ensure that the Council met the required standards to achieve the Silver Award.

The assessment was completed by the national Local Councils Awards Scheme Panel and the award shows that the Council has gone above and beyond the legal obligations to establish good practices in governance, community engagement and council improvement.

This is a huge achievement, building on the previous Foundation Award obtained in January 2022. Colehill is one of only six councils in Dorset to achieve a Silver level so we are incredibly proud to see the hard work pay off as well as ensuring the Council is working as hard as possible for its residents.

PLANNING MATTERS

Colehill Town Council are a 'statutory consultee' for planning applications. This means Dorset Council as our local planning authority must inform us of any planning applications affecting our town and take our views into account when making decisions on those planning applications.

The Council reviews all planning applications received and, if considered appropriate, will submit comments to the Planning Officer in the same way that any individual may do via Dorset Council's planning site.

In most cases Dorset Council no longer directly notify residents of planning applications submitted by their neighbours, and the Council is also aware that the site notices issued by Dorset Council are not always displayed correctly. Consequently, to help improve transparency for residents, the Council has established a page on the Council's website to share details of all planning applications received with links to the Dorset Council website for residents to submit comments should they wish to.

Where consultation timescales allow, the Council schedules planning applications for discussion at the next appropriate meeting, normally a meeting of the Highways, Plans & the Environment Committee (HPE) where residents can attend to discuss applications with councillors.

During 2025/26 the Council considered 56 planning applications, of which we objected to 12. During the same period Dorset Council passed 48 applications, 7 of which we had objected to, and refused 2, another 6 were withdrawn.

During 2025 Dorset Council consulted on a new Local Plan for Dorset. We provided a detailed response, including our views on the 13 potential housing sites identified within the Colehill area and 10 other nearby sites likely to impact on Colehill residents. In addition, we provided our feedback on the Dorset Design Code which will include rules and guidance for new developments and the Local Transport Plan which will set out the policies for improving transport over the next 15 years.

ROAD SAFETY MATTERS

We know that road safety is important to our residents, both as pedestrians and road users. We act as a voice for the community, reporting issues to the highway authority and suggesting improvements.

We own and maintain a Speed Indicator Device (SID) which is moved regularly between three locations: Middlehill Road, Leigh Road and Wimborne Road. The SID captures data on the speed of vehicles which is shared with the police to inform their speed camera operations. We know from evidence provided from Dorset Council that the SID is effective at reducing traffic speed.

We continue to liaise with Dorset Council to seek the installation of pedestrian crossing points at two locations on Middlehill Road, near Lonnen Road and near Cutlers Place. These locations were chosen following a public consultation in 2022, and have been assessed by Dorset Council as feasible sites based on road and pedestrian numbers.

Following a public survey we conducted in July 2025, we have asked Dorset Council to consider introducing a 20mph scheme covering the roads around Hayes Lane, Cutlers' Place, Olivers Road and Bridle Way.

COMMITTEES

Highways, Plans & the Environment Committee

Highways, Plans & the Environment Committee meets approximately 10 times a year and considers matters relating to: Highways including highways safety; street furniture; Planning including undertaking the council's role as a statutory consultee for planning applications; matters relating to Tree Preservation Orders; Environment including: climate emergency actions, land management plans for Council owned land. Residents are invited to contact the Clerk if they would like a specific planning application discussed.

Finance and General Purposes Committee

Finance and General Purposes Committee meets approximately 7 times a year and recommends to the Council the management of the Town Council's finances, authorises payment of accounts, prepares the Council's budget, recommends to Council any revisions and extensions of its financial policy, considers grant applications and considers all matters not falling within the province of other Committees.

COUNCIL ASSETS

Woodland

The Town Council own a number of woodlands which all contribute to the public amenity, and support a wide variety of wildlife. The trees are regularly inspected by an arboriculturist, who highlights any tree work that is required. We hold a number of Conservation workdays throughout the year to help maintain these areas and volunteers are always needed.

- Triangle Wood is the largest area and is well used by dog walkers and children. It lies between Colehill Lane, Smugglers Lane and Wimborne Road.
- Churchmoor Copse, off Cutlers Place and adjacent to Oliver's Park, is also used frequently by dog walkers and children. Much of the wood is categorised as 'ancient woodland' meaning it has been wooded for at least 400 years.
- Kyrchil Corner, near Kyrchil Way lies opposite the Co-op in Middlehill Road.
- Coombes Wood is in Smugglers Lane, next to the Vicarage.
- Merrifield Corner is by Smugglers Lane, almost opposite the Vicarage.

Oliver's Park & Playground

Oliver's Park is a large area of green open space which is accessible through a number of pathways off Cutlers Place. It is a great place to play football, have a picnic or walk the dog. The park has been awarded Queen Elizabeth II Field in Trust status, which means that it is protected in perpetuity for future generations to use for recreational purposes, and legally safeguarded against development.

The playground at Oliver's Park is designed for children aged 12 years and under. It is a fenced area with adventurous play equipment surrounded by soft play bark. Children can climb, jump, swing and slide on all the equipment without too much supervision. It includes a multi play unit and cradle swings specifically for younger children.

Park benches are provided both within the playground itself and outside in the recreation field, so parents, grandparents and minders can sit and watch their children having fun.



Benches

The Council has 13 public benches positioned around the town which we maintain regularly.

Noticeboards

The Council maintains 6 noticeboards throughout the town to ensure that residents, who may not use social media, can be kept up to date with local events and Council meetings.

War Memorial

The Council has a war memorial at the junction of Colehill Lane and Wimborne Road which it maintains and is used in Remembrance Sunday Services.



Dales Drive Telephone Box

The Council previously adopted a telephone box on Dales Drive. Following repair work this year the Telephone Box has been opened to the public as a book library which has been very successful and sees a high turnover of books. It is monitored by the Clerk who removes any items left in the box which aren't books and distributes the books between the phone box and The Reef Youth & Community Centre which has a bookshelf aimed at children and teenagers.

Defibrillator

The Council maintains two defibrillators which are positioned at The Reef Community Centre and One Stop for use by local residents.

FINANCES

Accounts

The Council's opening balance for 2025/2026 was £117,797. During the financial year the Council was in receipt of a total income of £172,236.51. The total expenditure for 2025/2026 was £154,459.12, leaving a closing balance of £156,454.45.

Spending was broadly in line with budget planning.

Precept

The Precept is the figure which a town or parish Council ask the local authority to collect from their residents alongside the Council tax.

During 2025/26 the precept was £138,500. The Council has reviewed the precept and resolved that it will be £143,000 for 2026/27 which is £46.85 for an average band D property and results in the average household paying an additional £1.34 compared to this year.

COMMUNITY

Councillor Drop ins

This year the Council has introduced monthly Councillor drop ins to provide regular opportunities for residents to speak to councillors about matters which they are concerned about or to find out more about how the Council operates. Members of the public simply email the Assistant Clerk who books them a slot at the next session.



Grants

During 2025/26, the following grants and payments were made by the Council in response to applications submitted by organisations.

Organisation	Sum awarded
Colehill Community Library	£12,415
Planet Wimborne	£100
Colehill & Wimborne Youth & Community Centre	£5,000
Colehill Guides	£200
East Dorset & Purbeck Citizen's Advice	£2,500
Colehill Cricket Club	£2,000



Community Bus

The Council jointly funds the Number 88 Community Bus service with Wimborne Minster Town Council. The service runs on Tuesday, Thursdays and Fridays and provides a circular route linking Colehill with Wimborne, Kingston Lacy and Sturminster Marshall. This year the Council contributed £4,750.

The Council part funds this service because the route services roads within Colehill which aren't served by any other bus routes.

Councillor Representatives

The Council has representatives on a number of local management committees and interest groups which both ensures that the Council is kept up to date of the needs of the local community and provides support to these organisations. This year the representatives have been:

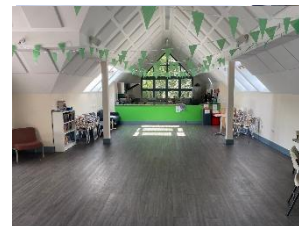
East Dorset Environment Partnership	Cllr Clare Davison
The Greathed Charity Trustees	Cllr KD Johnson
DAPTC – Eastern Area Committee & Larger Councils Committee	Cllr KD Johnson Cllr Andy Todd Cllr Susan Cowsill (reserve)
Wimborne and District PACT Panel	Cllr KD Johnson Cllr Ken Murgatroyd
Village Hall Management Committee	Cllr Ann Edwards Cllr Emma Urquhart
Fairtrade Representative	Cllr KD Johnson Cllr Richard Palmer
Colehill Community Library	Cllr Nigel Bridle Cllr Susan Cowsill
Wimborne History Festival	Cllr Emma Urquhart
Home Watch Representative	Cllr KD Johnson

Colehill & Wimborne Youth & Community Centre	Cllr Ann Edwards Cllr Carol Butter
Julian's Bridge Joint Working Group	Cllr KD Johnson

The Reef, Colehill & Wimborne Youth & Community Centre

The Council is the sole member of the charity and currently appoints 3 Councillors to act as the charity trustees and as directors to manage The Reef.

The Reef is a modern building, with great facilities, and provides many exciting opportunities to improve the range of youth activities for Colehill, Wimborne and the surrounding area, as well as providing additional services and facilities for our wider community.



EVENTS

Community Easter Fun Day in partnership with The Reef Youth & Community Centre

The Council co-sponsored a Community Easter Fun Day which provided the local community with a day of entertainment for children and an opportunity to come together. The event was attended by over 200 people and the Council ran an information table on the day for people to ask any questions of councillors.



VE Day 80th Anniversary

The Council commemorated the 80th Anniversary of VE Day by the laying of flowers on our war memorial and a community quiz which provided our local community with an opportunity to come together to mark the anniversary. Proceeds from the event went to The Reef Youth & Community Centre and Colehill Library.

Lamps of Peace

On 8th May the Council took part in a nationwide 'lamp lights of peace' event to illuminate the Colehill war memorial with lamps and 100 candles, many of which were inscribed with the names of those valiant men from Colehill who laid down their lives to give us the peace and freedom we enjoy today.





VJ Day 80th Anniversary

On 15th August the Council commemorated the 80th Anniversary of VJ Day with flowers being laid on our war

Remembrance Sunday

The Council marked Remembrance Sunday with a parade and service from St Michael's church to the Colehill War Memorial. The service was attended by St Michael's Church Representatives, uniformed groups, school representatives, civic services representatives and Councillors. It is an important opportunity for the local community to come together to mark Remembrance Sunday.



Children's Christmas Party

The Council once again organised a Christmas party for children which was held on 19th December 2025 at Colehill Village Hall and was attended by 39 local children along with family members. The annual party has become a key event in the local calendar.

To ensure that local residents benefit from this event the Council sells tickets from Colehill Library rather than online. The party provides a low-cost Christmas event for primary school aged children at which each child receives a food box, a present from Santa and gets to enjoy entertainment.

ENVIRONMENT & BIODIVERSITY



Blister pack recycling project

The Council continues to fund a blister pack recycling project to enable local residents to recycle blister packs which cannot be recycled with household recycling. The boxes are situated at The Reef being a location where residents can pull up easily to drop their recycling off.

Bulb giveaway

In October, the Council held a bulb giveaway providing bulbs to residents free of charge to plant on the verge outside their properties. This event was held alongside the Scouts Jumble Sale at Colehill Village Hall.



Fairtrade Pledge

The Council renewed its Fairtrade pledge to only purchase Fairtrade tea and coffee wherever possible.