

16th October 2023

Dear Parishioner

We are writing to you today to draw your attention to the need for a new Chair for Corston Parish Council (CPC).

Founded in 1894, the Parish Council has met uninterrupted since that date. However, our current Chair has indicated his intention to resign and other Councillors are not in a position to take over.

As a result, we now find ourselves in urgent need of a new Chair to take the Parish Council forward.

Corston has a significant number of responsibilities spanning planning and strategic developments affecting the parish, commissioning local services and managing local facilities. A fuller overview has been provided in the appendix to this letter.

Further insight into our activities and our statutory reporting can be found on the CPC website at <https://corstonpc.org.uk>

CPC currently meets six times per year. Its work takes place within a legal framework which defines its responsibilities and powers. We also have a comprehensive set of policies and standing orders, and the behaviour standards for Councillors are set out in our Code of Conduct.

All seven places on the Parish Council are currently filled and Councillors serve as volunteers, receiving no payment for their time.

However, one of our Councillors has indicated their intention to stand down, creating a vacancy that can be filled by a new Chair. We will also need to recruit a new Clerk once the Chair's post is filled. In the absence of a Clerk, individual councillors have committed additional time to lead on specific areas of CPC's business.

The remaining six Councillors would also provide whatever support is required by the new Chair to move into the role. Independent advice and training is also available through our "professional body", the Avon Local Councils Association.

We are looking for a Chair who can bring new and dynamic leadership to the Parish Council. They will need to be able to ensure that it serves the needs of all parishioners whilst meeting its statutory obligations and taking a long-term view of the opportunities and challenges that are likely to confront the parish in the coming years.

If we are unable to identify a new Chair then it will not be possible for the Corston Parish Council to continue operating legally.

If it cannot continue to operate then a likely outcome is that the Parish Council will be formally dissolved. At that point, precept funding will cease to be allocated to Corston, the responsibilities set out above will cease to be undertaken and local assets including the Playground, Recreation Ground and Valley Field will be returned to the Duchy for them to manage as they see fit.

It is also possible that B&NES would assign responsibility for the parish to a neighbouring Parish Council, giving it responsibility for decisions and spending affecting Corston. However, it is not guaranteed that this would include the management of the assets currently leased from the Duchy.

In either case, the interests of the parish are likely to be compromised and parishioners left with less influence and control over decisions affecting them.

Chairing the Parish Council can be a rewarding experience and one which allows the Chair to bring a range of knowledge, skills and experience to bear on a variety of issues affecting the Parish.

Working closely with our Ward Councillor also ensures that local issues and any work the parish requires undertaken are made known to B&NES officers and councillors.

If you would be interested in joining Corston Parish Council, you can find out more by contacting our Acting Clerk, John Bravin on corstonparishclerk@outlook.com

We would like to be able to formally appoint a new Chair at our next meeting on Wednesday November 22nd.

If you would like to join us, please send us a short email explaining your interest and experience to corstonparishclerk@outlook.com by 5pm on Friday November 10th 2023.

If you are not able to step forward as Chair but would like to be kept up to date via our email list, please email us at corstonparishclerk@outlook.com confirming that you would like to be added. We guarantee that your details will not be shared with any third parties.

Yours sincerely

Cllr John Bravin, Chair & Acting Clerk
Cllr Katharine Evans, Vice Chair
Cllr Anthony Birts
Cllr Richard Blows
Cllr Susan Charles
Cllr Kevin Shepherd
Cllr John Twist

cc Cllr Duncan Hounsell, District Councillor, Saltford Ward

Enc. Appendix setting out responsibilities of Corston Parish Council

Appendix: Responsibilities of Corston Parish Council

1. Setting an annual precept (currently £11,000), payable by parishioners and which provides CPC's operating budget.
2. Employing a Clerk (currently ten hours per week) to advise parish councillors and to manage CPC's meetings, finances, annual audit & assurance process and day-to-day business
3. Commenting on all planning applications concerning land, business & residential properties and protected trees within the parish of Corston, including ensuring that the Corston Conservation Area is respected and protected
4. Receiving and investing Community Infrastructure Levy payments arising from housing developments, most recently £2,500 from a house built in the village
5. Leasing the Recreation Ground and Valley Field from the Duchy of Cornwall, insuring and managing its use, supporting its maintenance by volunteers and taking bookings for events
6. Maintaining and insuring the Children's Playground, ensuring annual safety inspections are undertaken and repairs made as required
7. Maintaining and managing the use of the Recreation Ground Pavilion, including meeting the costs of electricity & water supply and performing regular electrical testing to ensure that the installation and the appliances are safe for use in events (e.g. Corston Country Fair)
8. Commissioning Parish services, including the weekly emptying of the dog waste bins by an accredited contractor and grounds maintenance of public areas
9. Working with our District Councillor to highlight parish issues and lobby for investment, most recently securing the resurfacing of Corston Lane and the introduction of a lower speed limit on the A39
10. Maintaining the village defibrillator
11. Ensuring that Parishioners are kept updated on CPC's meetings & decisions and on local consultations via the village noticeboard, CPC website and email list
12. Responding to strategic developments that have a potential impact on the parish, including the identification of sites for large scale housing development, strategic infrastructure projects such as the plans for the A4 corridor, or a new station at Saltford
13. Awarding small grants to community projects when funds allow, such as the Telephone Box Library and the Village Hall projector, screen and sound system
14. Working with other parish groups to support and promote events
15. Liaising with external stakeholders such as Curo, Cedar Homes and the Corston Business Park to ensure they discharge their responsibilities within the Parish
16. Representing the interests of the Parish on bodies including the B&NES Parishes Liaison Meeting, the Keynsham Area Forum and the Bath Environs Committee
17. Organising and running an Annual Parish Meeting (separate to CPC's own meetings) for parish groups to report on their activities and plans and for Parishioners to ask questions and raise issues of concern