

MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY SAMPFORD COURTENAY PARISH MEETING

To Members of Sampford Courtenay Parish Council

Date and Venue – MON 26TH APRIL 6.00 pm – Virtual Zoom Meeting

Agenda for the Meeting. **THIS MEETING WILL BE RECORDED**

Present: Cllrs M Wilson, M. Carpenter, B. Tucker, J. Friend & J. Palmer & Clerk M. Pratt

Members of public: JT, VS, BR, VM, CO, J & A P, M M, M MCI, PC, T & I R, D BP, H & B A, J MCI, S & F S, P C, S & D MCC, C & J S, RR. (24 members of the public)

1. **Apologies** – Cllr Coleman & JB.
2. **Chair Cllr Wilson** welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that in order to give all members of the public, who wished to speak, the opportunity – she was going to
 - a) give an overview of the need for this Extraordinary meeting
 - b) ask Cllr Mike Carpenter as lead Councillor on this project to explain the current position in the project
 - c) Then she would like to go through the various points made by Cllr Coleman in a letter he had distributed to parishioners and put them into some context.
3. **Declarations of Interest** – there were no declarations of interest except those explicit in this situation of a Planning Application made by SCPC.
4. **Minutes of this meeting** – a summary of the discussion will be minuted and published on the Parish Noticeboards, with reference to full written transcripts as Appendices, that can be downloaded from the Website.

Cllr Wilson – Introduction and overview – Cllr Wilson explained that it had been necessary to call this Extraordinary Meeting at such short notice because:

- a) Councillors were not made aware of Cllr Coleman's letter until last Thursday 22nd April when a parishioner forwarded a photo of one to the Clerk, and later that day the Chair received one in the post.
- b) As the Deadline for comments on the Planning Application that Cllr Coleman was asking parishioners to object to is 29th April a meeting was needed to give parishioners the opportunity to hear the position and rationale of the full council on this matter.
- c) Notices were posted on Thursday 22nd giving the statutory 3 days to call this meeting today.

(Introduction and Overview Appendix 1)

Cllr Mike Carpenter – Explanation of current situation of this project – Cllr Carpenter explained that as a qualified Chartered Surveyor and member of SCPC he was delegated by SCPC to survey the Public Toilets, as they are part of the Parish Priorities identified by the Parish Survey conducted in 2019. He explained that during this process he has taken advice from other professionals, and as required by the SCPC Financial Regulations sought quotations from 3 contractors and received Pre-Application advice from WDBC before submitting this Planning Application to replace the roof, doors and windows of the Public Toilets.

(Lead Councillor Statement Appendix 2)

Cllr Wilson shared a Power Point presentation working through the letter circulated by Cllr Coleman to give context to various points made.

1. **Decision to make Public Toilets a Parish Priority** – when SCPC conducted its Parish Survey in 2018, this was deemed the 3rd highest priority by parishioners SCPC took on the responsibility of the Public Toilets in 2007, but little maintenance has been done of them since then, hence their current poor state of repair.
2. **No provision for disabled Access** – the lead and the principle building designer have ensured that these current repairs comply with the Equality Act. Phase 2 will require amendments to access points and road surface to enable wheelchair access and will require additional planning.
3. **Cost of the project** – Cllr Carpenter’s initial survey estimated that a full refurbishment would cost in excess of £50,000. This concurred with figures previously submitted to SCPC by Cllr Coleman which at various stages he has stated that he could realise 100% funding through firstly a Public Works Board Loan, then a Community Interest Company, an Architectural Competition and now an application for a “Changing places” grant. When asked on several occasions to provide details of these sources of income he has either refused or said he is unable to do so. The cost of these current repairs will be covered by the Small Business Rates Relief Grant that was issued to businesses during Covid 19.
4. **Role of the Planning Committee** – the Planning Committee is a Sub-Committee of the SCPC set up at the AGM in order to consider any Planning Applications during the year that fall between normal monthly meetings. (This year it has not been necessary to call a special meeting and as such no one has been elected as Chair of that committee)
5. **Appointment of Cllr Carpenter as the Project Lead** – as a Chartered Surveyor, Cllr Carpenter was considered the most qualified councillor to lead this project.
6. **Outline of the vote and updates from Pre-application advice from WDBC** – SCPC Minutes since Sept 2020 will show the chronology and democratic decisions made regarding this application after consultation with WDBC for Pre-Application Advice.
7. **Parish Council Standing Orders explaining why Cllr Coleman’s proposal was not considered and minuted** – Cllr Coleman has been reminded on several occasions over the past year that Minutes are not “verbatim” records of what was said or circulated but a summary of decisions made; which was the case with his written contribution at the April meeting. As a long standing councillor he should also be aware that Parish Council Standing Orders prevent the revisiting of items within 6 months. This is another attempt by Cllr Coleman to subvert the Standing Orders.
8. **Oversight of the Equality Impact Assessment for the project** – an Equality Impact Assessment has never been requested by WDBC, and was therefore not submitted with the Application. However, the assessment can be requested from the Clerk and will now be submitted to WDBC to be considered alongside the application.
9. **View of the Architect and his withdrawal of services due to a conflict of interest** – the Architect referred to in Cllr Coleman’s letter has advised SCPC previously on the War Memorial, and gave advice to Cllr Carpenter regarding this planning application. It was only when Cllr Coleman contacted him independently with his own suggestions for the Public Toilets that he wrote informing us that due to the conflict he would have to withdraw his services from SCPC and Cllr Coleman.
10. **Failure of Cllr Coleman to present or make available to the Parish Council a plan to obtain 100% funding** – As stated at Point 3 Cllr Coleman has repeatedly stated that he could obtain 100% funding for this and other SCPC projects but has failed to provide evidence to this end.
11. **Timing of the advertised Government funding in relation to the application and desired outcomes** – The funding referred to in an accompanying letter from Disability Rights UK was only announced in January 2021 and refers to the “Changing Places” grants for larger public buildings and is unlikely to be applicable to our toilets.

12. **Rationale for the decision made at Parish Council Meeting on 6/10/20 to undertake a 2 phased approach** – with the unexpected receipt of the grant for £10,000 in October, SCPC agreed on the 2 Phase approach to go ahead with essential maintenance to secure the fabric of the building in Phase 1, and then seek additional funding to make the toilets fully accessible in Phase 2. The consequence of waiting for 100% funding for full refurbishment at this stage could possibly have led to closure of the toilets due to Health and Safety reasons.
13. **Equality Impact Assessment overview** – the Equality Impact Assessment shows that this 2 phase approach will disadvantage the least number of parishioners and members of the public. SCPC have received no communication from anyone stating that they feel they are currently disproportionately disadvantaged with the current accessibility. SCPC will make it known that arrangements can be made for the use of the other disabled toilets within the parish if required.

Cllr Wilson and Clerk - then asked other Councillors and members of the public to indicate if they wished now to make any comments

Cllr J Friend – If we don't do something to preserve and maintain the building they will have to close and disadvantage more people. WDBC should know the Equality Act Law. I agree with Cllr Mike Carpenter we need to get it done.

Cllr B Tucker – This is not a redevelopment of the toilets, but necessary repairs.

Cllr J Palmer – As the toilets have needed maintenance for so long, why did Cllr Coleman not do anything when he was chair of SCPC. I feel everything he does is just to discredit and disrupt the council.

Members of the public comments:-

VS – I feel I was purposely targeted by Cllr Coleman because of my disability and I wanted to come and hear what you had to say and I know how misinformed Cllr Coleman can be. I think SCPC have done everything they need to do, you have not ignored the Equality Act but are sensibly doing it in 2 stages. His suggestion about the "Changing places" grant is not an option for Sampford Courtenay – they would involve a massive new building. I don't know what he is actually trying to achieve. I think it is just sour grapes. But on the flip side if you need me in my wheelchair to check out angles and gradients for the next stage, or use my paraplegic status to help with grant funding I am more than happy to help.

VM – asked that as she had done a lot of research in preparation for this meeting, she would like to read her prepared script and that it be fully recorded with the Minutes. (See Appendix 4) VM reiterated many points already made by Cllr Carpenter and Wilson and added that if Cllr Coleman had missed a meeting, surely it was his responsibility to catch up on documents and minutes he had missed. VM concluded - I would have more time for the arguments presented if I thought they were borne out of a genuine concern for the comfort, convenience and rights of the individuals who need accessible toilet provision rather than a perceived intention to score points and to frustrate due process. VM fully supports the Planning Application as discussed.

JM – Felt if it is a Repair not a Refurbishment there was no need for Planning Permission. He also felt that outline plans of Phase 2 should also have been included.

Cllr Wilson explained that Planning Permission is necessary because although a repair, it involves different materials from original when replacing the roof, windows and doors.

DBP – did not receive a copy of Cllr Coleman’s letter, so was suspicious if it had been a targeted distribution. As a parishioner he is very concerned how an individual councillor can spread such misinformation. He agrees that the “Changing places” grant is for much bigger buildings – but as a previous “Access Officer” he supports the application for Phase 1 and ask that there is a clear commitment to Phase 2 by SCPC soon for a variety of impairments.

DMC – Current plan sounds realistic and sensible. Just can’t understand why SCPC and Cllr Michele has had to spend such additional time on this when it is all so unnecessary. It doesn’t seem the right way for some people sitting on the Parish Council.

BA – Over the past 12 months while SCPC meetings have been conducted via Zoom, we have attended most meetings and seen how members operate. We have full confidence in the current officers making the right decision. This application will benefit more people than it disadvantages. We fully support the SCPC

MM – Can only echo what last speaker has said. I felt misled by first paragraph of letter in thinking you were spending £10,000 on a new roof. I am sure many parishioners are grateful for having the experience and expertise of Cllr Carpenter working for SCPC and the parish. Thank you for holding this meeting, I believe it has done the reputation of the council much good and gone some way to counteract the harm caused by the distribution of this letter.

PC – Very disappointed in the letter, which I have read as signed as Cllr Colin Coleman, member of SCPC. It is very misleading because this is his personal view not that of the council. I would seriously ask SCPC to consider reporting Cllr Coleman to the West Devon Standards Committee Officer.

MMC – Again queried if it is just a repair if it needed Planning Permission. Plus questioned if Cllr Carpenter was acting in a professional capacity with adequate Professional indemnity Insurance or just a volunteer.

Cllr Wilson assured everyone present that Cllr Coleman had highlighted the requirement for a Principal Designer and Principal Contractor to fulfil Health & Safety Executive Standards, and as Project Lead this is something Cllr Carpenter took into consideration when issuing Tenders and considering who would take these roles and they will be fully indemnified.

Cllr Wilson then thanked everyone for attending and for all the comments. A full report of this meeting will be submitted for consideration by WDBC Planning Committee, but if anyone would like to submit their own individual comments, either in support or an objection, they need to be submitted by 29th April. Cllr Carpenter will be hand delivering SCPC report and is happy to take any of your submissions too.

Appendix 1 – Introduction and Overview.

Good evening to this Extra Ordinary Council meeting

Whilst it is a positive that so many Parishioners have made the effort to come along tonight and as set on the Agenda there will be opportunity for all that want to have opportunity to have your say in relation to the main item of tonight's meeting, which is the Parish Councils Response to the letter Circulated by Cllr Coleman independently from the Parish Council and the democratic decisions that have been made.

There is a sadness and frustration amongst Councillors that it has been necessary to call this meeting but as none of the Councillors had been made aware prior to the letter being received by post on Thursday last week we have had to act in the timescales that were set on 25/03/21 when the notices were published, and to meet the deadline of the response by 29th April 2021 and the need to give 3 days notice for this meeting there was no other option.

The disappointment also comes from the fact, that whilst diversity in a Council is a very good thing, this will inevitably bring with it different skills, attitudes and opinions. That said the best way for a Council to work is as a Team to make decisions fairly, openly and transparently representing local residents. That is not to say that Councillors will always agree but that is where there is a clear democratic process that is governed by the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct to ensure that Councillors are held to account for their behaviour.

As a Councillor we have responsibility both individually and collectively to maintain high standards and behaviour, any action or conduct taken as an individual councillor affects the reputation of the Council as a whole which is the concern and need for tonight's meeting.

I feel before Parishioners are given the opportunity to have their say it is important for the Council to clarify a number of issues surrounding this project. As the Lead I would ask Cllr Mike Carpenter to give an overview of the work he has undertaken and I would like to go through Cllr Colemans letter highlighting and giving clarity and much needed context to 13 points within the document before giving other Councillors opportunity to add anything.

Then when Parishioners have their say they can do so with the benefit of having had a clear understanding of the response from the Council to Cllr Colemans personal opinions.

Appendix 2 – Lead Councillor Statement

May I start by saying I'm very disappointed that Cllr Coleman is not at this meeting when it can be accessed from anywhere in the world.

Background

I have been a practising Chartered Surveyor for over 35 years. My business has been advising people on property condition and value on both residential and commercial properties, which has involved schedules of condition, defect reports as well as dealing with redevelopment.

I was delegated by the PC to prepare an assessment on the Public Toilets, which involved a condition survey. From this it was clear the roof was leaking and in poor condition and that the

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windows and doors needed replacement. It would also be beneficial to update the toilet facilities but the most urgent issue was the repairs to save the building.

I prepared a report for the PC along with recommendations. Due to the condition of the building, it was vital that the repairs were done first before the more substantial refurbishment of the toilet facilities. This would be phase one and the facilities phase two.

Prior to reporting to the PC, I consulted with a Building Surveyor as well as an Architect.

My report was voted on by the PC and passed.

I put the work out to three contractors, two of which I met on site. We discussed both phase one and the future phase two to confirm the second phase was feasible after completing phase one.

The one thing we had to do to facilitate this was to make sure the doors are DDA and Equality Act Compliant. This was incorporated into the quotes by the contractors.

So, to be absolutely clear we are repairing the building not refurbishing the toilet facilities.

This is where Cllr Coleman has been very misleading in his letter, stating that the works will not comply with Disabled Access. This is despite being told repeatedly at Parish Council meetings that all works are DDA compliant.

This brings me onto the letters from the various charitable organisations he attached to his letter. He has clearly given them the impression that we are refurbishing the toilets not repairing the building. Very different and misleading.

With reference to Cllr Coleman not receiving a copy of the Application. Once he asked for it, it was sent to him along with a copy to all Councillors.

He also quotes the well-respected architect Jeremy Chadburn who gave me help and advice whilst preparing the planning application. But what speaks volumes is that Jeremy, an experienced architect, accepts the fact that the project will be done in two phases, as quoted in Cllr Coleman's letter. A clear vindication that a two-phase approach is acceptable and flies in the face of Colin's impractical wish to get it all done in one go.

As regards the cost of phase one of the project, we have the funds thanks to the Business Relief grant paid to us because of COVID and the toilets being Business Rated. So there is no financial burden on Parishioners or the Precept.

In Summary

Cllr Coleman's letter is both misleading and divisive designed to create unwarranted doubts in parishioners minds about our proposed repairs to the toilets.

The fact that he is not here speaks volumes.

Appendix 3 – Power Point Presentation Notes.

Point 1 - Decision to make Public Toilets a Parish Priority - Following the undertaking by the Parish Council to build a Parish Plan, the current Chair of the Parish Council conducted a Parish Survey to allow all residents to have their say. This was completed in 2018 and in February 2020 a Priority was set to improve the toilet facilities in the Village to comply with the Equality Act. This was based on 50% of respondents stating that they used the toilets and the fact that the maintenance and renovation of the facilities were the 3rd highest in importance to have in the Parish.

Point 2 - No provision of disabled access - in forming the plans currently submitted the Principal Designer along with the project lead have taken clear advice on the specifications of things such as door frames, light source to ensure that they are compliant with Construction (Design and Management) Regulations and that the application clearly sets out the initial planning consent has only been required due to the fact that the designers have suggested that the most appropriate and cost effective material to meet the Parish financial needs in the future. Whilst there is no change in the current design there is a change in material and because the building is in the Conservation area requires Planning Permission. Changes to the structure of the building and the approach to the entrance for access for those requiring wheelchair access and disabled toilets are likely to require further planning consent.

Point 3 - Cost of the project - When Cllr Carpenter was tasked with undertaking a feasibility for the renovation or renewal of the existing toilet building, he prepared a fully costed proposal which was considered by Full Parish Council at the September 2020 meeting and then agreed unanimously in October 2020 for him to progress quotes for the initial repair of the building utilising the Small Business Rates Relief Grant received. It does not rely as is suggested by Cllr Coleman on any part of the precept income. In this initial document the complete project was estimated to cost £50,000. As Cllr Coleman had been stating both as part of his CIC proposals and specifically in respect of the toilets since January 2020 that he could obtain 100% funding for this project, but when requested to identify the funding source in order to verify that the criteria for application would meet the project, he refused to give details of the source of the architectural grant and to date has never provided details.

Point 4 - Role of the Planning Committee - Cllr Coleman fails to mention that the Planning Committee is a Sub-committee of the Full Council. Its role is recorded in the Officers and representative notice published following the Parish AGM - as 'a sub-committee of councillors that can be called to consider planning applications that fall outside normal monthly meetings'. As the issue of the public toilets had been fully discussed and presented to and been voted on by the Full Council there was no role for the sub-committee to consider anything.

Point 5 - Appointment of Cllr Carpenter as the Project Lead - Having professional qualifications and experience as a Surveyor, there was full confidence in appointing Cllr Carpenter as the Project Lead. That experience and links enabled professional contacts from whom he has been able to seek advice on behalf of the Council which was a key point in the Project Risk Assessment

Point 6 - Outline of the vote and updates from Pre-application advice from WDBC - The Chronology for the delivery of the improvements to the toilets started in September 2020. Pre-application advice was sought from the WDBC Planning department as part of the Risk Management Plan. These in-depth discussions considered aspects of the proposals including specifications, dimensions and materials. The application, together with other key documents requested by the Planning Officer were submitted and accepted in late January. Throughout the period of ongoing liaison with the Planning Department as agreed in the democratic vote at Full

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Council in October 2020 Cllr Coleman had offered no support whatsoever to the project. He did however send an email in March to offer to redraw the plans already accepted by the Planning department, the offer was very generous however came far too late to be of assistance. Had he accepted the democratic decision made and then offered support rather than continually attempt to undermine the project, which the unilateral action of sending this letter continues to do, then his own knowledge and experience may well have been very useful to the project.

Point 7 - Parish Council Standing Orders explaining why Cllr Coleman's proposal was not considered and minuted - In stating that he presented his comments to the meeting that he was unable to attend, these were duly considered in the discussions that took place. However as indicated in previous points a democratic Vote was taken and unanimously agreed to progress with initial stage of the project to secure the integrity of the building. Under Standing Orders a decision properly made cannot be revisited within 6 months. This letter is just one means by which Cllr Coleman has attempted to subvert this decision

Point 8 - Oversight of the Equality Impact Assessment for the project - Cllr Coleman has continuously voiced his opinion in respect of DDA issues and the responsibility of a public body to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, relevant aspects of our duty to consider this were collated as the project progressed and have been reviewed and an assessment document drawn up. As this was not requested or indicated as required for the Planning application at this stage it was not submitted as part of the application but will be forwarded for consideration by the Planning Committee as part of the decision making process

Point 9 - view of the Architect and his withdrawal of services due to a conflict of interest - The inclusion of the comments by the Architect are unfortunately completely out of context. The withdrawal of support came when Cllr Coleman independent of the Council made direct approaches to the Architect regarding his alternative proposals not seen or approved by the Full Council. This placed him in a position where he felt there was a conflict of interest and withdrew his services regarding the project to all parties.

Point 10 - Failure of Cllr Coleman to present or make available to the Parish Council a plan to obtain 100% funding - As previously indicated as part of numerous statements and reports presented to Parish Councillors Cllr Coleman has made assertions that he is able to either as a Cllr or through a CIC initiative obtain 100% funding for the planning and construction of new Toilet facilities with an estimated cost of £50,000, however despite actions and requests for detailed plans, together with the details of the grant providers nothing has been presented.

Point 11 - Timing of the advertised Government funding in relation to the application and desired outcomes - The letter from the Disability UK Charity does highlight funding that has now been declared but this only became public knowledge in January 2021 and the details of the criteria for application, prioritisation of funding applications and eligibility has not yet been disclosed. The decision made together with the rationale for making the planning application was made well before these details were published.

Point 12 - Rationale for the decision made at Parish Council Meeting on 6/10/20 to undertake a 2 phased approach

1. Refurbishment of the Public Toilets has been a Parish Priority for 2 years
2. Whilst there has been statements that both phases of the refurbishment can be 100% grant funded (for 2 years), no evidence, detailed proposals or access to the grant funding information has been provided by the Councillor making these statements (see Appendix A where the majority of proposals have been to acquire a loan to meet the CIC initiatives)
3. The current state of repair of the toilets requires immediate replacement of the roof to ensure the integrity of the outer shell of the building and the safety of users currently utilising the facilities

4. The current state of the doors and windows are a hazard and are unable to be closed effectively impacting on the maintenance of the internal structures

5. The proposed repairs are to replace these items with upgraded materials to ensure value for money and compliance with building regulations required to meet the Disability Discrimination legislation which has been updated by the Equality Act 2010. Specifications are set out in Construction (Design and Management) Regulations See Appendix B

6. Opportunity to complete the initial repairs immediately was created through receipt of £10,000 grant funding for the toilets with no increase to the Precept or ongoing financial debt

7. To wait for the application of grants for upwards of £50,000 (based on the initial costings See Appendix C) to complete as one project would mean the closure of the current facilities which was something that parishioners were very strongly against when they 'Had their say' in the Parish Survey

Point 13 - Equality Impact Assessment overview

The assessment records the outcomes that the Parish Council want to achieve as

i) to provide a serviceable building from which fully compliant services can be achieved once funding is available

ii) prevent the closure of a service that serves all groups in the Parish and was considered a key Parish asset and priority

Due to the rural location and the fact that this is a free facility, there has been no data collected to assess the impact on usage. Having been raised as a key priority by residents its use and maintenance has been regularly discussed at open parish meetings with no contact / communication from groups who may be disproportionately impacted by the current services provided. Feedback in the Parish Survey was fully positive by all respondents and all comments during public Council meetings have raised no issues from members of the public to the documented discussions and decisions.

Whilst the decision cannot meet the full duty set out in the Equality Act at completion of Phase 1, it sets in place the specifications to achieve compliance with completion of phase 2 without the need to remove the public service

The assessment sets out both the positive and negative impacts of users with protected characteristics and it is recognised that there could be a disproportionate impact upon one or more 'protected characteristics. But the impact effects the least number of people if the decision is adopted, with mitigation put in place whilst funding is achieved for the completed works. It should be noted that the provision of public toilets is not a statutory duty and many Parish Councils do not provide such facilities. As such, any specific funding decisions must be considered against the background of the very limited Precept received by the Council. In this context, it is believed that this decision democratically made by the Full Council is a "proportionate means" of achieving a legitimate aim; the "legitimate aim", in this case, is the balancing of the Council's budget, which must be achieved for the Council to continue to meet its core statutory duties and equality objectives. It is therefore held that any temporary disproportionate impacts will not amount to unlawful discrimination under the terms of the Equality Act 2010. It is recognised that whilst likely negative impacts have been identified these are considered to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Appendix 4

Sampford Courtenay Public toilet building - Extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council 26th April 2021

1. The planning application is for a change to the building, not the actual toilets and, as such, full compliance with Equality or ‘Changing Places’ legislation isn’t required at this stage. I understand that the Phase 1 works will secure the continued function of the building before it deteriorates to the point of no return – in which case, we’d lose the facility completely.
2. I have been assured that the Phase 2 proposals will enable wheelchair access into the building and that the existing steps, internal arrangements and facilities will be changed significantly at that stage. There seems to be a genuine commitment to complete this and not to defer it indefinitely. In my view this is a sensible course of action.
3. There does not appear to be a legal obligation on Councils at any level to provide a certain number of toilets, either per head of population or based on the relative distances between one facility and another.
4. The ‘Changing Places’ legislation which has just come into effect requires a 4 x 3m ‘accessible’ toilet and changing area in most types of property where those venues are either new or subject to a material change (or 3m x 3m in existing buildings). The total area of the building and plot under consideration might limit what is possible anyway. Changing Places toilets have to be provided in new buildings which are used for assembly, recreation and entertainment with a capacity of 350 or more (or a collection of smaller buildings with a capacity of 2000 people or more). Clearly, our toilets do not serve a specific building as such but a community so these principles do not apply. Having said that, there appears to be a genuine acceptance of the moral obligation and a willingness to meet as far as possible the Changing Places legislation and to accommodate the needs of as many people as possible when considering the detail of Phase 2 and committing the necessary funds.
5. It is widely believed that many public bodies used the Disability Discrimination Act as an excuse to close public toilets altogether with more than a fifth apparently having closed since 2010. It is likely that the same will happen again with this new ‘Changing Places’ legislation and that yet more public toilets will be closed to all. Sampford Courtenay Parish Council is to be praised for having a plan to meet the requirements in principle.
6. The project cost of £10,000 is one I cannot comment upon in detail. I have been assured that there was a tendering process with the required number of quotations sought before the project was presented to the full Council so I assume that it is realistic. *It must be remembered that the best part of £9000 was spent on the War Memorial in the Village and that tabled proposals to change it further would have increased the cost of that project to well over what is being earmarked for Phase 1 of this project.*
7. I fully understand that the anticipated cost of Phase 2 cannot be finalised as it is dependent on the chosen layout which is still being considered. I’m pleased to hear that the possibility of grant aid is also being explored to minimise the impact on the Parish Precept. I understand that Phase 1 would not have qualified for accessibility grant support as it relates solely to the building and not the toilet facility. I also understand that it has not been funded from the Precept but from the COVID Business Rates Relief Grant.
8. In the papers circulated before this meeting, Cllr Coleman mentions that he has missed significant Full Council meetings at which the plans for the toilet building were considered. There is a clear obligation on his part to ensure that he catches up on the issues discussed in his absence rather than criticising others for not consulting him. I have been assured that he has not been denied access to relevant information as claimed in his letter. It is a pity that he wasn’t available for this meeting to address such points.
9. This application comes at a time when we are planning developments on the Village Green which will encourage both informal and organised events on that space. The recent provision of picnic tables at the Village Hall is another example of the Parish encouraging the wider use of its public spaces by families and groups. The Public toilets are the only facility open outside of organised events and it is essential that we do all we can to keep them open, to preserve the building in the first

instance and to extend the facility to a wider range of users through the implementation of Phase 2. It might have allayed concerns if the draft Phase 2 proposals had been tabled alongside the Phase 1 process but there is a clear urgency to secure the integrity of the building at the earliest opportunity so, understandably, Phase 1 has taken precedence.

10. My final point is one that I would prefer not to making in this forum but, given the tone of the letter that we have received from Councillor Coleman, it feels appropriate to do so: I would have more time for the arguments presented if I thought they were borne out of a genuine concern for the comfort, convenience and rights of the individuals who need accessible toilet provision rather than a perceived intention to score points and to frustrate due process.

I fully support the proposals as tabled and I question the motive of an individual Councillor in raising issues in this way and not through the more usual Council procedures.

I applaud the efforts of all those who strive to improve the quality of life within the Sampford Courtenay Parish for all concerned. I am more than willing to meet with Cllr Coleman to discuss face to face his intentions when acting in this way which is, seemingly, at odds with at least some of his fellow Councillors and which has resulted in the need for this Extraordinary meeting.