

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 17th May 2021 at English Bicknor Village Hall. The meeting was held in compliance with the new Special Conditions of Hire during Covid-19 drawn up by the Village Hall Committee following Government regulations.

Those present were as follows:

Councillor Mrs P. Drinkall – Chairman
Councillor Mr D. Gunter

Councillor Mr K. Braithwaite
Councillor Mrs A. Bowen

Councillor Mrs Owen
County Councillor Mr T. Hale

Councillor Mr P. Warden

40. Apologies and welcome

Apologies were received from Cllr Mr J. Carrick. The chair welcomed Mr T. Hale, who had been re-elected as our County Councillor in the recent elections. To date, the Parish Council has not heard from our new District Councillor.

41. Public Forum

There were no members of the public present.

42. Reading and confirmation of the minutes of the last Parish council meeting

The minutes of the last Parish Council meeting, which was held in December 2020, were proposed by Cllr Warden, seconded by Cllr Gunter and agreed by all present, following which they were signed by the chairman.

43. Matters arising from the minutes of the last bi-monthly meeting

571 Parking at the School PCSO Jayne agreed to monitor the parking at the school. It is understood she visited once and her initial reaction was that it was no worse than at other schools in the area. However, PCSO Jayne was concerned at the traffic speed, and promised to contact the road safety team about setting up a speed monitor, which has now been used in the village. After speaking with Cllr Mrs Drinkall, she visited the area again, during which time she experienced the problem. She contacted the school to ask the Headteacher to include in their newsletter her disappointment that parents park in an inconsiderate way, and suggesting that they park along the straight stretch of road. She has also offered to go into the school to give talks on Road Safety etc. The Parish Council were pleased to receive a copy of her e-mail to the school. It has been noted that in the mornings cars still park on the bends, but in the afternoons cars are parking along the straight stretch of road. The clerk will pass this information on to PCSO Jayne and ask if she could attend the area in the mornings.

690 BT box, English Bicknor Cllr Braithwaite was thanked for his work in sealing the hole in the BT box.

754.1 Speeding in Hillersland Cllr Braithwaite continues to move the VAS sign through Hillersland and to monitor the data and in March produced a further report, which showed maximum speeds of over 70mph and an increase in the number of vehicles travelling at above 60mph. PCSO Jayne has confirmed that she supports the reduction of the speed limit to 30mph due to there being no footpaths and an increase in visitor numbers. A speed survey was taken by Gloucestershire Police by the old BT box in Hillersland between 23rd and 30th April. The results showed that the average speed heading towards Christchurch was 40mph, with the average speed heading towards Symonds Yat being 41mph. However the 85thile speeds are 47 and 48mph, prompting Debbie Powell at Road Safety and Traffic Management of Gloucestershire Police to forward the results to the Team Leader for the Camera Enforcement Team. Debbie Powell has now asked that data from the VAS be sent to her in future. As all correspondence relating to speeding in Hillersland was also sent to Mr B. Watkins of County highways, he will also be sent data from the

VAS in future. It was clear that data from the VAS shows lower speeds than those from the police camera, as the VAS is visible, so motorists slow down, while the police camera gives a truer picture of vehicle speeds.

Speed sign for English Bicknor As the poles for the speed sign have still not been put in place, County Cllr Mr T Hale will speak to Mr A Middlecote of Highways to expedite this. Following concerns expressed by PCSO Jayne, a speed survey was carried out by the police over a period of 14 days near the playing fields in English Bicknor. The mean speed for vehicles travelling towards Hillersland was 39mph, while the mean speed for vehicles travelling towards Ross was 34mph. However, speeds calculated at 85%ile are higher than this, which means that the police are now passing their report on to the Camera Enforcement team to see if it is suitable for enforcement. On the back of the results, the camera enforcement team will attend the area to assess if there is a suitable place to site the speed van. If one is identified, it will mean the speed van will regularly attend the area.

782.2 Street lighting in Hillersland County Cllr T Hale was able to confirm that Saskia are looking at the spread of light from the street lights, as many rural areas are affected by poor lighting since the introduction of the new lights.

951.2 Speed limit approaching Symonds Yat Rock County Cllr Hale felt that the data from the VAS at Hillersland will help towards discussions to reduce speeds at the approach to Symonds Yat Rock. After discussion, councillors reiterated that the problem is where the car park meets the highway and therefore questioned the need for Herefordshire Council to be involved as the nature of the road when it reaches the Herefordshire County boundary is not conducive to speeding.

972 Blocked drains Mr A. Middlecote has advised that Highways have no plans to alter the drains on Chapel Hill.

989 Lengthsmen County Cllr T Hale was asked if he could arrange for the lengthsmen to carry out weedspraying as soon as possible.

11.4 Seat at Godwins Lane After consultation with councillors, a seat made from recycled plastic bottles was purchased. The total cost of £369.60 included £45 for delivery, £54 for the name English Bicknor Parish Council to be engraved into the plastic, and £61.60 VAT, which has been reclaimed. The seat, which is in situ at the top of Godwins Lane, has prompted positive comments from several parishioners.

26.4 Lime Kilns The new steps and the top of the Lime Kilns are very overgrown. Cllr Warden offered to spray the weeds using his own sprayer and Glycosphate supplied by Cllr Gunter.

23. Footpaths in the Parish – broken stiles The broken step on the stile where footpath REB9/1 joins REB32 on the WyeValley Walk, has now been repaired.

32 Accounts for payment Lloyds bank have confirmed that Cllr Warden is now a signatory on the bank account.

33. Precept for 2021/22 A request was made for £3,900, which was paid into the Parish Council bank account on 16th April.

34. Highway matters County Highways advised on 9th March that the sign at the corner of Tump Lane had been put back into its correct position. However, it was reported that the flag is not at the top of the pole and is dirty. The clerk will contact Mr A. Middlecote to ask if this is something which could be carried out by the Lengthsmen.

35.1 and 2 Footpaths in the parish The broken footpath signs have now been replaced. The PROW officer asked if a list of flags to be replaced could be sent to him. Councillors felt that flags will always need replacing regularly as they are positioned where they are easily knocked off by hedgecutters.

35.3 Footpaths – stile covered in barbed wire Cllr Mrs Bowen was thanked for ensuring that the barbed wire was removed from the stile on footpath REB5/2, which is on land owned by her.

37.4 Ash Dieback Project The clerk was asked to contact the Ash Dieback Officer to ask whether they will survey English Bicknor Parish for any Ash trees, and to ask what the situation regarding the Project is at the current time.

38.2 Paper stock The clerk confirmed that she still has a large stock of paper for printing up

minutes.

38.3 Drain at the bottom of Church Hill

Mr A. Middlecote has advised that the work has been added to this year's programme and will possibly be carried out in the summer, although there is no date yet.

39 Dates of meetings in 2021 Due to the Covid19 pandemic, no meetings had been held until today's meeting., following which the Annual Meeting and Parish Assembly will be held on 24th May. The meeting on 17th May will replace the meeting originally scheduled for 7th June, so no meeting will take place on that date. Hopefully meetings for the remainder of 2021 will continue as planned.

44. Report of the County Councillor

County Cllr Hale thanked all keyworkers and volunteers for all they did for their communities over the past 15 months. The County Council have set their budget for the year, which includes £100million put into roads and money to support tourism and the local economy following Covid. He spoke of the problems associated with the closure of the Upper Lydbrook road, where the signs, which caused a lot of confusion, have now been improved. He confirmed that the work is now progressing well. Other priorities for the County Council includes working with the Welsh Assembly towards creating a Chepstow by-pass and a cycle track between Lydney and Parkend. Faster broadband is now being put in place across the Forest of Dean.

45. Planning Matters

(669) 2 Cherry Tree Cottage, Hillersland P0046/21/FUL

Erection of a single storey extension to rear of property to provide utility/reception

Full permission was granted on 12th March 2021.

During lockdown the following application was received and considered by councillors.

(670) Lower Carterspiece Farm, English Bicknor P0369/21/FUL

Change of use of land to tourism for the siting of a shepherd hut.

Councillors supported this proposal, but questioned why a biodiversity report had not been presented with the application. The District Council subsequently asked the applicant to submit a biodiversity report.

46. Accounts for payment

Miss W. Lawrence – clerk's wages, office allowance and expenses £727.25

HMRC – income tax on clerk's wages - £156.00

Mrs S. Stratford – auditor's fees - £70.00

Miss W. Lawrence – flags for flagpole - £8.79

Mr S. Sproat – plants for planter - £31.95

Community First Trading – insurance renewal - £286.79

The following items of expenditure were authorised and paid for during the lockdown due to the pandemic..

Miss W. Lawrence – clerk's wages and expenses - £308.64

HMRC – income tax on clerk's wages - £75.13

GAPTC – affiliation - £112.63

Community Heartbeat Trust – annual support for the defibrillator - £162.00

Mr P. Scott – web licence fee - £19.18

Marmax Products – new bench - £369.60

A copy of the overview of finances had previously been circulated, while the latest bank statement was available to view at the meeting.. Acceptance of the accounts and payments were proposed by Cllr Mrs Owen seconded by Cllr Braithwaite and agreed by all present. The clerk will find out whether councillors' vehicles are insured while on Parish Council business.

47. Change of internal auditor

Councillors agreed to appoint Mrs S. Stratford as the Parish Council's new internal auditor. The clerk had checked the criteria for appointing a new clerk, which require that the person appointed has suitable experience and is independent of financial decisions within the Parish Council. Mrs Stratford's experience had been previously circulated.

48. Highway matters

1. Cllr Carrick had sent a message that during the heavy rain there was yellowish water coming from the third drain down Chapel Hill. The top two drains on Chapel Hill were covered in silt. Cllr Gunter advised that much silt is covering Bicknor Street from the field at Dryslade Farm used for motorbike scrambling and wondered whether this was making its way into the drainage system. The clerk will report this to Highways.
 2. Flooding had occurred earlier in the year to properties in Murrells Road. A drain under the playing field was felt to be the cause of the problem. County Cllr Hale confirmed that this drain is the responsibility of County Highways and he will speak to them about it.
 3. The clerk was asked to contact Mr. A. Middlecote to ask when the two further sections of the Eastbach Road will be resurfaced, as the road is now in a very poor condition.
 4. Councillors are pleased at the work which has been carried out to clear overhanging branches at the top of Junction Hill. However, they are concerned as this now leaves a sheer drop on one side. The clerk will ask County Highways if a barrier could be placed here in the interest of road safety.
 5. Four or five markers at the edge of the ditch along Redhouse Lane have been knocked over.
 6. At the top of Godwins Lane, the picture has disappeared from the no-footpath sign.
 7. The old 'English Bicknor' sign on the left hand side coming up Junction Hill, has been badly battered and bashed. Councillors agreed that a new sign is needed.
 8. The vegetation on the left hand side at the bottom of Junction Hill is badly overgrown and needs clearing.
- The clerk will report all of the above to County Highways.

49. Footpaths in the Parish

1. Cllr Mrs Drinkall has compiled a list of flags which are missing from public footpath signs. These will be forwarded to the PROW officer.
2. On REB/48/1 from the main road through Hillersland there is a large fallen tree trunk across the entrance to the path. The undergrowth on this path needs cutting back for about 40 yards as it is difficult to follow it through the undergrowth.
3. REB/47/1 from the main road through Hillersland for about 100 yards the path has many obstacles in the form of fallen trees, branches and other vegetation.

50. Public Rights of Way – the Definitive Map

In February the Parish Council was informed that a change in legislation means that a cut-off date has been introduced for adding historic paths to the Definitive Map. This Map is the legal record of rights of way and is kept at Shire Hall. After 1st January 2026, routes which are not recorded may be extinguished. At the present time, the map can only be viewed on-line. Cllr Carrick confirmed that all the footpaths shown on the map used by the Parish Council are also shown on the on-line Definitive Map, but Cllr Mrs Drinkall asked County Cllr T. Hale how we could find out whether the map in the possession of the Parish Council does show all historic rights of way? County Cllr Hale will record the Parish Council's dissatisfaction, as the on-line map was very confusing.

51. Flood Defence – an alternative to sandbags

In March, the District Council offered to Parish Councils the opportunity to receive a supply of FloodSax, a lightweight, re-usable alternative to sandbags. Councillors agreed to ask for 20

FloodSax, which will be provided free by the District Council. Once the FloodSax are delivered, the question of storage will be discussed. It was suggested that the owners of Yew Tree Cottage should be asked if they would like to have a supply, as this is the property in the Parish usually affected by flooding.

52. Emergency Scheme of Delegation for the Clerk

Following the end of the 2021 lockdown and the re-starting of live meetings, GAPTC forwarded a document relating to procedures to be followed. Within this document, GAPTC outlined an Emergency Scheme of Delegation to the Clerk for those times when face to face meetings cannot take place. The document was circulated to all councillors, who agreed with the following recommendation: 'That the Council delegates authority to the Clerk in consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman to take any actions necessary with associated expenditure to protect the interests of the community and ensure council business continuity, informed by consultation with the members of the council. The scheme of delegation will be reviewed no later than September 2021'. Cllr Braithwaite proposed that this recommendation be accepted, Cllr Warden seconded and all present agreed.

53 Painting of telephone box in English Bicknor

Cllr Carrick had been contacted by a parishioner who offered to paint the BT box in English Bicknor for only the cost of the materials, and he and Cllr Mrs Drinkall met Mr R. Jago to discuss this. Councillors were delighted with this proposal, however, the costings came to £123, which is more than the amount budgeted for both the telephone boxes and the flagpole for the year. To enable the refurbishment, the clerk will contact other Parish Councils to ask if they have any spare black and grey floor paint or any gold paint, as only small quantities are needed. Councillors will also contact any parishioners who they think may be able to help.

54. Wild Boar

Although boar are still present in the Parish, there have been no issues with them in the past few months.

55. Correspondence received since last meeting

1. An e-mail has been received from the District Council concerning the Keep Britain Tidy Campaign, running from 28th May until 13th June. Litter sacks can be collected from the District Council, who will also collect them once full. However, this information came too late to advertise the campaign in the Parish magazine. The clerk was asked to request that the District Council carry out a litter pick between Dryslade Farm and Sterts Farm and through Hillersland to Symonds Yat Rock, both areas where there are no footpaths.
2. An e-mail has been received from the FOD Sheep Liaison Group, advising that no meetings have been held due to the pandemic, but including contact details.
3. The Coleford Area Partnership Steering Group wrote to ask for the name of the parish representative to attend their meetings. It was confirmed that Cllr Carrick remains the Parish Council's representative to this Group.
4. The Forest Voluntary Action Forum forwarded details of a DigiBus, which will visit communities in a converted double decker bus packed with digital technology. This free service will provide workshops in basic computer skills, coding and more, plus 1-1 support, and act as a free W-Fi hotspot. It was agreed that the clerk will reply to say that the Parish Council is interested in the DigiBus visiting the Parish and would advertise any date set for such a visit. The clerk will ask whether the presence of the DigiBus could affect the wi-fi of local residents.
5. A letter and brochure has been received from the Royal British Legion Industries giving details and prices of Tommy figures. This information had been requested by the Village Hall Committee. The Parish Council will look at the costs and any maintenance costs and discuss the matter further at the next Parish Council meeting.

6. English Bicknor Primary School has sent a letter confirming that, due to falling numbers, the school has now become part of the Severn Federation Academy Trust, which was formed in January 2021.

56. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council

1. Following heavy rainfall earlier in the year, two properties in Murrells Road were affected by water in their gardens. County Highways attended to deal with a storm water drain which crosses the field behind the village hall and asked Cllr Gunter to assist in raising the manhole cover on the drain. Under this cover was just a hole, around which Cllr Gunter placed four large cones, which were subsequently removed. Cllr Gunter therefore contacted County Cllr Hale, who agreed that it was unsafe to leave the hole with no cover, so Cllr Gunter replaced the cover. At this point the drain had not been jet-washed as planned. County Cllr Hale confirmed that County Highways are trying to find out ownership of the pipes under the ground, though it is probable that they are owned by Gloucestershire Highways. County Cllr Hale will contact Mr A. Middlecote concerning this matter, as, along with Yew Tree Cottage, this is the only part of English Bicknor where flooding has taken place. Cllr Gunter was thanked for his help in this matter.

2. Cllr Carrick attended a meeting of the Village Hall Committee, who asked if the Parish Council were happy for them to lay a patio on the side of the village hall. The Parish Council are happy for this work to be carried out.

3 The Village Hall Committee asked for dog waste bins to be placed in the village, but councillors felt that this is not necessary.

4 A complaint has been received from a parishioner concerning the noise from motor cycle scrambling at Dryslade Farm on three days during one week. The clerk contacted the District Council, who confirmed that this location can only be used for motor bike riding on a total of 14 days in a year without planning permission. This 14 days covers both practice and private leisure use as well as organised events.

57. Date of next meeting

The next bi-monthly meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Monday 2nd August 2021 at 7pm.