

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 6 August 2024 at English Bicknor Village Hall.

Those present were as follows:

Councillor Mrs P. Drinkall (Chair)
Councillor Mr K. Braithwaite (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Mr P. Gwilliam
Councillor Mrs A. Bowen
Councillor Mr H. Cole
County Councillor Mr T. Hale.

Members of the public:

Mr S Andrewes
Mrs S Shelbourn
Mrs A Watkins
Mrs D Gwilliam
Mrs J Harris

335. Apologies and welcome.

Welcome was given. Apologies were received from Cllr Gunter via Cllr Gwilliam and Cllr Peter Warden.

336. Update on the new website by the Council's website manager.

Mr Andrewes set up a projector display for his presentation. From this, he displayed the Council's current website and the new one currently under development.

The current site is built on old and rapidly obsolescing technology. So far, this is manageable; however, if the site were to break down, it would be very difficult to repair. The new site is being built on a Wix system, which is much safer and easier to use. Wix contains numerous backups and higher levels of security.

Mr Andrewes then gave a brief tour of the new website, demonstrating how it would accommodate the Parish Council, alongside the Village Hall and Saint Mary's Church. The new hosting will cost more, although the fees will be split equally between the three organisations.

Photos of local activities and places would be included. Regarding the Council, fifty documents have already been transferred from the old site to the new, with around two hundred remaining to be processed.

The Village Hall has differing needs in the form of a booking page, although this should be easy to accommodate. The Hall also needs differing links to its social websites.

Chair Drinkall asked if the new site can be easily found online. Mr Andrewes explained that Google should be able to direct viewers directly to the Parish Council pages. The previous

website contained information and links to local services and activities, which would need to be checked and updated. These links will also help the search engine direct people to the website.

Once operational and publicly visible, the site can be updated and modified as problems and suggestions arise.

It was agreed that it would be easier for all parties if Mr Andrewes were billed directly from the hosting company. The three organisations would then refund him in three parts. This is because Wix needs a single billing source and a single payment to be collected. Continuing, though each party will have control over its sections of the website, the Parish Council will act as the ultimate owner of the website.

All parties also agreed that they were happy for the new website to go public as soon as possible when it was ready. At some point, the Clerk will be given the access codes to the new site to update the Council's information at his convenience.

The Chairman thanked Mr Andrewes for his work, and he left the meeting.

337. Public Forum.

There were strong criticism of the Parish Council from all four members of the public.

Firstly, a higher donation to the village hall committee towards grass cutting of the playing fields was sought, and although the Parish Council had requested a letter detailing precise costs and a maintenance plan, this was not forthcoming. Instead, the Parish Council was informed that the cost last year was £1,630.00 and this year the cost would be around £2,000.00. This is for the part of the field nearest the road as the bottom part is cut by the Councillors P. Gwilliam and D. Gunter. The Council was told the field is used by the Cheltenham junior football academy in winter, WI Croquet, Football kick around by Village children and dog walking.

Secondly, the Council was asked about the missing postbox and the Chairman explained that the Council had attempted all formal lines of communication with the post office, and received no response. She and at least two other local residents had also contacted the post office. The latest informal information received was that the box would be replaced in a month's time.

Thirdly, the view was expressed that the Village looked very untidy with pavement weeds, the overgrown hedge opposite Cowmeadow farm and litter. The Chairman responded that the Council had asked the County Council for the weeds to be attended to on numerous occasions over the past years, as minuted, and County Councillor Hale confirmed the County Council's position of banning herbicides with no suitable alternative being found. Regarding the hedge, the land owner would be asked to cut it back, and regarding litter, the Chairman and other residents were known to pick up litter and the WI had organized a litter pick last year. Furthermore the Parish Council had requested of the District Council a litter pick in the Spring of most of the previous years, as minuted.

Fourthly, a complain was made about the dirty condition of the bus shelter. The Chairman advised that it was last cleaned by her and the then resident of Yew Tree Cottage. Mrs

Shelbourn volunteered to clean it with the current resident of Yew Tree Cottage and was thanked for this.

Considering the above, the Clerk will check if the Council's current insurance policy covers the work of volunteers who contribute to potential cleaning utilities and weed cutting. Cllr Hale stressed the importance of this and would investigate if the County Council's insurance may cover this.

Finally, the Chairman was criticised for not attending the recent 90th anniversary of the Village Hall. The Chairman was out of the Country at the time.

The members of the public left at 20:04.

338. The reading and confirmation of the minutes of the previous bi-monthly meeting.

Proposed Cllr Gwilliam.

Seconded Cllr Braithwaite.

Resolved.

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

Cllr Gwilliam declares that he has an interest as head of the Village Hall Committee.

313. English Bicknor Village Hall play equipment VAT issue.

Cllr Gwilliam raised this matter again, and the Chair reiterated the Council's previous decision on this matter. The Council does not intend to facilitate the Village Hall's tax refund, as the advice received is that it would potentially amount to fraud.

296. Meeting with Hereford-based parish councils over shared road issues.

Cllr Hale confirmed that this project appears to be suspended indefinitely. This item will be removed from the next Council Minutes.

186.1 Warning sign on the footbridge at Symonds Yat Rock.

No response has been received from the letter sent to Police for funding. The Police Commissioner will be pursued as a follow up. Also, Cllr Braithwaite will raise the issue of the sign funding at the next road safety meeting. The Council will continue these pursuits to exhaust all avenues, and if all fails will reconsider purchasing a pictorial sign for the footbridge.

951.3 Community speed watch Camera.

Cllr Braithwaite had regained contact with the community speed watch team. The camera repair would not be free and likely cost at least £200. Cllr Braithwaite also believes that the total cost of replacing the Camera would be around £600. The Chair asked him to bring this up in the next County Road Safety meeting. The Clerk advised that it was not possible to claim on the insurance as the Camera did not belong to nor had been paid for by the Council. Cllr Hale was also asked to look into the feasibility of replacing the pole that the Camera was on. Mr A Middlecote will be contacted to provide a higher post.

84.5 Red House Lane.

The Clerk would continue to press for the update of SatNav to warn about the lane's unsuitability for cars, by contacting Mr B Watkins of Gloucestershire County Highways to see if he could help. Mr Middlecote would also be advised of the continued mud situation and asked for some remedial work, as he had suggested some time ago.

219.2 Pavement weed spraying.

This was addressed in the public forum.

288 Resolve on the course of action regarding the repair of the flagpole.

The new flagpole had now been paid for and delivered to Symonds Yat Rock. However, the baseplate may need more work to fit it into the ground. If so, a local metal worker could do this for a low fee. The Clerk would inform Mr Edwards at the Forestry Commission of the incoming installation. Cllr Gwilliam was thanked for his work in this. It is hoped that the flagpole will be erected shortly.

249. Highways matters.

It was reported that Highways had acquired the new sign for outside Dryslade farm but had yet to install it. This should be undertaken in the next few weeks.

321. Parish Council Website issues.

This was addressed in the public forum, and it was agreed that if Mr Andrewes submitted an invoice before the next meeting this could be paid.

328. Planning Matters.

The Clerk would check the previous planning application for their progress and report back.

330. Potholes Eastbach Road.

No progress had been observed on the potholes along the Eastbach road, and the Clerk would pursue the repair of these.

333. Review of the new FODDC district plan.

The comments on the new local plan were discussed. As the plans were similar to the policy already in place and had little impact on the village, it was deemed that the Council should support these plans. The Clerk would upload this to the FODDC website.

334. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council.

Regarding Cllr Gwilliam's request on behalf of the Village Hall for the Parish Council to increase its contribute to the annual grass-cutting of the playing fields. Cllr Gwilliam was asked to remove himself from the meeting during this, and he left the room at 20:45. This discussion covered many areas already mentioned in the public forum.

The decision was made to increase this year's donation to £450 to the Village Hall.

Proposed: Cllr K Braithwaite.

Seconded: Cllr Mrs A Bowen.

This payment will be confirmed in the next agenda.

Cllr Gwilliam was asked to rejoin the meeting.

334. Continued.

Cllr Braithwaite confirmed that having worked with Cllr Warden, the Council's risk assessment had been updated with the registry concurrent to the current year. A few items were removed. Examples of changes would be the seat at Godwin's lane being put back on, and the Symonds Yat Flagpole being suspended until its repair. The Clerk will receive this up-to-date register when it is finalised.

340. Report of the County Councillor.

Cllr Hale reported that Mr Hawthorn, the head of the County Council, had resigned. The incoming national government has caused some uncertainty, but the housing targets are predicted to change.

Local road works in the near future will include resurfacing the Stowe and Lydbrook roads. More resurfacing will also be done in the English Bicknor Parish area at an unspecified date. The issue of cars in the Lydbrook area using the streets and building entrances as free parking needs to be investigated. Cllr Hale will examine the matter of the hedges encroaching into payments and report back at the next meeting.

341. Report of the District Councillor.

None.

342. Planning Matters.

No planning applications received.

343. Financial report and accounts for payment:

Hampshire Flag Company – Replacement Flagpole - £923.99

Mrs S Stratford – Yearly internal Audit - £70.00

Mr Jonathan Martin – Clerk's wages, office allowance and expenses - £334.94

HMRC – income tax on Clerk's wages - £83.74

Total: £1,412.67

Proposed: Cllr H Cole.

Seconded: Cllr P Gwilliam.

Resolved.

344. Highway Matters.

There were no further Highway matters.

345. Footpaths in the Parish.

None.

346. Wildlife and pest matters.

None.

347. Correspondence received since last meeting.

None.

348. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council.

Cllr Mrs Bowen reported that the Lime Kilns have been cleared of weeds. She was thanked for her efforts.

349. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 1 October.

The meeting ended at 9:08 pm.