

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 1st December 2025 at English Bicknor Village Hall.

Those present were as follows:

Cllr Kevin Braithwaite.

Cllr Peter Warden.

Cllr David Gunter.

Cllr Mrs Avril Bowen.

Clerk Jonathan Martin.

Member of the Public: Mrs Daphne Gwilliam, representing the English Bicknor Village Hall Committee.

01. Apologies and welcome.

No apologies were received from either County Councillor Piers Camp or the District Councillors Clive Elsmore and Tim Gwilliam.

Cllr Harry Cole was believed to be away or otherwise indisposed.

Apologies had been received from the Vice Chair Mrs Cllr Pat Drinkall, who was on vacation.

02. Public Forum.

A representative of the English Bicknor Village Hall Committee was present. The issue they wanted to address was the dilemma of the Village Hall field grounds being used, essentially, as a Village Common, yet being financially supported by only a relative few. The nature of this contribution is typically attendance at local events, as well as regular classes and clubs in the village hall itself. Several councillors were surprised to understand that the village hall is not charging the football users for use of the playing fields but only the facilities of the village hall. The representative said that their understanding was that they were not authorised to charge for use of the playing fields. Councillors agreed that if this was the case then it made no sense as the village hall should be receiving payments from the footballers for the field and these payments should be paying for the upkeep of the football area. This was something that required further investigation by all parties.

The ongoing and increasing costs of maintaining the playing fields, specifically, mowing the grass was raised. The quotes that the Parish Council obtained was discussed and the representative stated that using this new contractor would be more expensive than the existing one, for a like-for-like scope of work. Councillors expressed that maybe the areas only in general use could be cut less frequently in order to reduce overall cost but this was not deemed to be acceptable by the village hall representative as they believe the field required this level of maintenance to remain presentable.

Councillors noted that the Parish Council allocates one third of its total Parish Maintenance budget as a grant to the Village Hall for the upkeep of the playing fields and would review this amount later in the meeting.

The Village Hall representative left the Meeting at 7:33 pm.

03. The reading and confirmation of the minutes of the previous bi-monthly Meeting.

Proposed: Cllr D. Gunter.

Seconded: Cllr Mrs A. Bowen.

Resolved.

04. Matters arising from the minutes of the last bi-monthly Meeting.

There were no updates to the information provided by the Forestry England talk from the previous meetings.

951.3 Community speed watch Camera.

The vehicle-activated speed sign in English Bicknor will be rotated to point in the other direction at the end of the year, and its data will be collected. The Chair undertook to oversee this. Cllr Gunter said he had heard that the Camera is reducing speeding. Generally, there was positivity to the continuation and future of this project as it was believed to be beneficial to the road safety.

84.5 Red House Lane.

The Clerk reported that he had received no updates from Gloucestershire Highways, including the request for 'no through road signs'. The Clerk will attempt this again. The Clerk detailed the recent correspondence from a local resident, in which footage of the flooding and mud build up was sent to the Parish Council. The Clerk explained that he had forwarded the complaint to Gloucestershire Highways and provided them with the FixMyStreet website to use.

219.2 Pavement weed spraying.

Deferred to February.

330. Potholes. Eastbach Road.

The Clerk stated that he had forwarded photos of road damage to Gloucestershire Highways and reiterated the agency's subsequent response, which found the damage insufficient to warrant repairs at this time. The Clerk will stress to Highways that the Council believes the road's poor condition requires immediate repair.

383. Water Leak. Hillersland/Symonds Yat Rock Road.

The Clerk stated that, generally, the matter of the spring is only a public matter when it crosses the Highway, especially if it becomes frozen in winter and becomes a hazard.

The issue of gritting the roads was raised. The Clerk will investigate this.

387. Regarding the complaint of excessive traffic at the School, to the PCSO.

It was generally agreed that the matter of the repeat offender who seems to be deliberately running over the traffic cones was a private matter of the School, and that the Parish Council should not get involved. The Chair will ask the Road Safety Liaison Group in January if they are aware of this matter as the initiative originally came from there.

388. Pavement at Castle House.

No updates.

397. Footpaths in the Parish.

Cllr Gunter reported that both he and Mr Simon Andrews had completed cutting back the overgrowth along the footpath at REB 18/1. Cllr Gunter also said that new trees were being planted along the track sides and that the adjacent hedgerow of the track is also being managed as part of a long-term plan.

415. Wildlife and pest matters.

Cllr Gunter said that the wild Pig infestation has been seen digging up local areas. People are gradually being made aware of the problem-animals. The Forestry Keeper believes there are at least 5-10 animals in the area.

417. A. Re: Lucy Court power pole overgrowth.

Cllr Gunter reported that National Grid has not removed the single tree threatening the power lines. They said the reason was that the growth had not come close enough to the wire to warrant cutting.

A volunteer group is still being organised.

05. Report of the County Councillor.

None.

06. Report of the District Councillor.

None.

The Clerk will request regular updates on future meetings from all visiting Councillors who plan not to attend in person.

9. Highway matters.

Nothing.

10. Ash Dieback in the Parish.

There has been no real new information, other than Forestry England confirming its standing policy of targeting trees only on its land.

15.1 Re: Derelict Lorry trailer near Stowfield Road.

Cllr Gunter said that County Councillor Camp had reported the problem to the authorities, as well the Parish Council, who had also reported the matter to the District Council. Since the

lorry's abandonment, the vehicle has tipped over due to the weight of the trailer sinking into the mud.

The Clerk reported an update received from the Forest of Dean District Council. This contained news of active inter-agency co-operation on the matter. Because of the criminal nature of the fly-tipping, a police investigation is probably involved.

It was also reported that the landowner had been given a quote to clean up and remove the derelict.

15.3 Re: Primary School Car Park Grass.

The land in question is believed to belong to the Village Hall. This renders it a matter for the Village Hall to negotiate with the Primary School.

07. Planning Matters.

7.1

**Copperbeech, Hillersland Lane, Shortstanding, Coleford.
Proposed change of use of part of existing domestic garage and storage building to form one bedroom, two person holiday let unit. The proposal does not entail any external alterations to the existing building. P1312/25/FUL**

The Chair gave a brief description of the application and its background history. It was also mentioned that, because the site falls on the demarcation line, West Dean Parish Council had commented on it.

Generally, the application was supported for its potential to add to the local economy and the District Council Tax base.

The Parish Council had no objections to make.

7.2

**1 Murrells Road, English Bicknor, Coleford, Gloucestershire.
Erection of a single storey annex in rear garden to provide ancillary accommodation for a dependent family member. P1340/25/FUL**

The Chair gave a brief description of the application and its location. The neighbours were also cited as supporting the application.

The Parish Council supports this application.

08. Financial report and accounts for payment:

The Clerk detailed the increase in the ICO's yearly subscription.

Financial report and accounts for payment:

- **ICO subscription fee – £47.00 (Paid via Direct Debit on 2/11/25)**
- **1st October – 30th April 2026 English Bicknor Village Hall Hire 4x20 = £80.00**
- **Jonathan Martin – Clerk's wages - £334.94**

Total: £461.94

Proposed: Cllr Gunter.

Seconded: Cllr Warden.

Resolved.

A new grant agreement with the Village Hall will be formulated for the next financial year.

08.1 Discussion on 2025 budget review and 2026 forecast.

Projections for the end of the 2025-26 budget suggest that the Precept will be largely expended.

The future budget will contain the following features.

- The yearly regeneration of the savings account will be reduced from £500 to £250.
- The Statutory budget, i.e. the mandatory expense, will be set at £4,494.
- The grant to the Village Hall will be increased to £475.00
- Contingency will be added to the Statutory Spending of £225

The proposed Precept for the next financial year is £8,036.00. This is frozen from last year as cost efficiencies have been achieved through lowered recovery of expenses for Parish Elections.

09. Highway Matters. (Continued)

There was nothing to report other than the ongoing weed overgrowth. Ideally, this should all be cleared before the Village fete.

The Clerk will continue to chase this up.

11. Footpaths in the Parish.

None.

12. Wildlife and Pest matters.

These three items have been covered in item 415 under matters arising.

13. Correspondence received since last Meeting.

There is nothing new to report.

14. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council.

Cllr Gunter described road works on Chapel Hill Road. These appear to have been ineffective. This will be reported via FixMyStreet.

Cllr Warden suggested that memorial names be put on the Village's phone boxes. However, it was felt that the already existing memorial in the church was sufficient. However, there is nothing objectionable about this. The Parish Council could be approached for a £500 grant to contribute to this.

Secondly, Cllr Warden mentioned the use of a serial flyer issued by Drybook Parish Council. English Bicknor Parish Council could do the same, creating regular articles and other notices

although this could in some way be repetition of the information published in the Parish Magazine.

15. Date of next Meeting, and dates of next year's meetings.

The next Meeting is set for 2nd February 2026.

The schedule for next year's meetings was agreed on and will be booked with the Village Hall. These are proposed as:

30th March

11th May

1st June

3rd August

5th October

7th December

End. 9:35