

English Bicknor Parish Council

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

Those present were as follows:

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

292. Apologies and welcome.

No apologies were received from the District Councillor, Mr Tim Gwilliam and Jamie Elsmore.

293. Public Forum.

None.

The Chairman mentioned the recent death of former Parish Councillor D. Owen, and the Clerk will send the Parish Council's condolences.

294. Reading and confirmation of the minutes of the last bi-monthly meeting.

Resolved.

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

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

Councillor Hale reported attending a recent meeting with another nearby Parish Council to discuss the various shared road issues. The next meeting date will be within the month, and English Bicknor's attendance would be beneficial. Cllr Braithwaite and the Chairman agreed to attend.

186.1 Warning sign on the footbridge at Symonds Yat Rock.

An update on this group of issues on this topic detailed that the warning signs and yellow road markings had yet to be installed. It was stressed that these warning signs should be pictographic rather than written. This is so that lorry drivers whose English is either poor or non-existent can understand it. The Clerk was told to enquire with Forestry England if they could pay the cost of these signs, at about £400.00.

951.3 Community speed watch Camera.

Cllr Braithwaite stated that there was no substantial new news since the previous meeting, other than the application being delayed as the previous police team handling the other side of the operation had been re-tasked.

The Speed camera machine itself was reported as working; however, its solar panels were not powerful enough to restore its batteries in winter. The device still does not work at night for the same reason. Cllr Braithwaite purchased these panels, and the Parish Council confirmed that he would be reimbursed for them.

So far, the Camera has caught many instances of speeding and driving without a license. The rate of road offences at Hillersland is higher than the national average. Several repeat offenders have been detected. To combat this, the Parish Council will be charged the cost of posting warning letters from the police to the owners of the vehicles caught.

Cllr Braithwaite suggested that he may need help processing and logging the many photographs. Eventually, reports on the Camera's findings will be routinely given to the Parish Council. These reports will also help the police focus their policy. The Clerk will update the Council's insurance policy to include the new Camera.

84.5 Redhouse Lane.

Councillor Hale reported that no warning signs have been added to close the lane. He also stated that the County Council has run out of temporary warning signs that could be used as a stopgap.

Councillor Gunter suggested that if the Council reneges on its responsibility to install warning signs, then the parish Council should withdraw its offer of keeping the road clear of mud.

The Clerk was told to try to ask MP Mark Harper's office to refer to a request to have the SatNav data updated to reflect that the road is unsuitable for motor vehicles.

297. Warning sign on the footbridge at Symonds Yat Rock.

This was partially covered in item 186.1.

207. AONB Grants for kissing gates.

Cllr Drinkall stated that one local person has expressed an interest in applying for a kissing gate grant. It was suggested that anyone interested in this should contact the Parish Clerk, who will refer them to the grant application website.

219.2 Pavement weed spraying.

The County Council was still arranging this treatment, which was likely to involve the new foam method.

219.4 Lorries travelling to Stowfield Industrial site.

Councillor Hale had tried to contact the industrial site but had not found anyone to communicate with about the various complaints. These matters will be discussed at the next County Council road safety meeting.

277. Scrambler bikes.

Cllr Gwilliam was asked if all future scrambling events can be advertised in advance as a means of alerting the public. If the Clerk was made aware of this, news of events could also be put up on the Parish's website.

262. Payments.

The Clerk will continue to request clarification of the new fee schedule for the Village Hall. Specifically, what is the policy for short meetings in the lounge that are less than 30 minutes in duration.

299. Planning Matters.

It was reported that application P1486/23/TCA regarding the rectory at English Bicknor, overhanging trees was being processed.

287. Proposed budget for the next financial year of 2024/25.

The Clerk reported that the Precept forms had been filed and that receipts had recorded this.

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

This item was moved from Item 11.

Cllr Gunter had conversed with Mr Edwards on the issue of the Flagpole's baseplate. The problem is that the Symonds Yat site is protected, meaning that no new digging can be done here. The original baseplate has been retrieved, but Forestry England would like the new Flagpole to be made more secure. This problem has no clear answer and will continue to be worked on. However, options are limited as a steel pole would cost more than £3,000, meaning that fibreglass is the only option. The original pole may be sold for scrap to regain some of the costs. Definitive quotes will need to be addressed on the next meeting's agenda to progress this work.

249. Highways matters.

The previous sign at Dryslade Farm has been removed and is suspected to be stolen. Highways were reported to be planning to repair the sign soon.

It was reported that Gloucestershire Highways had repaired the drain here at Junction Hill.

300. Bank Issues.

The Clerk reported that he now has access to the Council's PAYE system, and it is working. However, the recent attempt to secure online access to Lloyds banking has yet to work. A new effort will be made via a different application method.

301. Report of the County Councilor.

Councillor Hale reported on the events of a meeting he had had with a neighbouring parish in Herefordshire on various road issues. He also stated that the Spring at Junction Hill had been reported to the relevant department. A fallen tree had also been reported. However, someone had already removed it.

Discussions have been held on the recent local road closures and the disruption they have caused. Cllr Hale stated that the money available for road repairs is expected to increase after the new budget meeting. The Environment Agency has also been made aware of a build-up of plastic waste and is working to resolve this.

The local salt bins in the Parish were confirmed as having been topped up.

Lastly, Cllr Hale reminded the Parish Council that some 'Build Back Better' grant money remained should the council plan to apply. Cllr Braithwaite thanked County Councillor Hale for his efforts on this.

302. Report of the District Councillor.

None.

303. Planning Matters.

None.

304. Financial report and accounts for payment:

Mr Jonathan Martin – Clerk's wages, office allowance and expenses - £334.94
HMRC – income tax on Clerk's wages - £83.74
Cllr Braithwaite – Reimbursement for Speed Camera Solar Pannels - £103.05.

Resolved.

305. Preparation for the Audit of the financial year 2023/24.

The Clerk was authorised to begin these preparations.

306. New Council Website.

This item was moved from item 311. The Chairman described the options available for upgrading the Council's website. A price comparison document showing the cost of a website hosted by Wix was passed around. The Village Hall Committee and Friends of Saint Mary's will contribute a third of the cost along with the Parish Council, approximately £60.00.

The Parish Council resolved that the upgrade would advance, yet control needs to be maintained. Generally, payment to the website host company would be monthly or yearly.

The Clerk will get quotes from the various options.

307. Report on the progress of the repair of the Flagpole.

See above.

308. Highway Matters.

The Clerk stated there had been no response to various emails sent to the authorities on the local drain and road issues. Cllr Hale cited that the County Council has a considerable backlog of repairs. Heavy rains had also recently added to this list, causing problems.

The Clerk was instructed to send a summarised list of the following issues to Andrew Middlecote for an update. These are Symonds Yat, Redhouse Lane, drains, and the Village sign at Drysdale farm.

309. Wildlife and pest matters.

Cllr Gwilliam reported a recent sighting of Wild Boars and recommended that local people keep their gates closed. It was advised that if dead wild boars were found, they should also be reported to the FODDC pest control department.

310. Correspondence received since the last meeting.

This was covered in numerous items above.

311. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council.

The idea of setting up a fruit tree orchard on the Village Hall grounds was proposed, but this would need the Parish Council's later permission. Perhaps this item would be best set for the Annual Parish Assembly agenda.

Cllr Drinkall raised the conjoined problem of the overgrowth of the trees planted by the Millennium project. Cllr Braithwaite said that he might know someone who would do the work.

Cllr Drinkall raised the new problem of the village post box disappearing, which is presumably under repair. Cllr Gwilliam reported that the post box is being replaced. It is not known when this will be achieved.

Cllr Drinkall reported that the heritage footpath notice board at the Glebe needed repair. Cllr Warden will investigate.

Cllr Braithwaite raised an issue with water on the highway below Reddinghorne cottage, Hillersland.

Date of Next Meeting: 2th April 2024.

End. 9:25 pm