

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 3rd December 2023 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 P. Warden

279. Apologies and welcome.

No apologies were received from Councillor H. Cole.

280. Public Forum.

None.

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

Meeting held on August 1st. Amendment to 260, planning application P0786/23/PIP was refused formally on 1st august 2023.

Proposed. Cllr Gwilliam. Seconded. Cllr Warden.

Resolved.

Meeting held on 5th October.

Proposed. Cllr Braithwaite. Seconded. Cllr Drinkall.

Resolved.

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

951.2 Speed limit approaching Symonds Yat Rock.

The Chairman reported that he had been in meetings with the Parish Council in Herefordshire, which is faced with similar speeding issues. These meetings would be continued with the presence and assistance of County Councillor Terry Hale. Potentially, a shared solution could be produced, for example, sharing the costs of replacing speeding signs.

At the time of this meeting, it was reported that the carpark sign on the back of the current sign had not been installed, despite previous requests to the County Highways. Also, the yellow road lines remained covered by mud. The Clerk would chase this up with the highways department.

951.3 Community Speed Watch Camera.

Councillor Braithwaite stated that little had changed since the previous meeting. This having been caused by communication problems with the organisers. He continues to chase this up.

The new speed camera would be impeded by the overgrowth of vegetation. This overgrowth would need to be cut back. The agreement for this pruning has yet to be arranged.

84.5 Redhouse Lane.

A complaint from a member of the public was relayed about having their car stuck in the mud for around four hours. This person was stuck there with their two young children. Councillor Gwilliam assisted in the rescue, explaining that water had infiltrated the car's exhaust, causing the breakdown.

It is believed that the origin of this problem stems from inaccurate SatNav data. Many years' worth of attempts to correct this have failed. The Clerk will however make his own attempt to make this update and report back.

The Chairman stated that he had also reported the recent flooding here to Gloucestershire County Council.

Cllr Hale said that the road could not be closed off, however a stopgap solution would be to place warning signs held down by sandbags. The County Council would also volunteer to clear the road of mud. However, as long as the road remained open then the SatNav might still direct people down the road.

186.1 Warning sign on the footbridge at Symonds Yat Rock.

The quote for the warning signs had been found by Cllr Braithwaite at £412 for a sign 6x2 feet in dimensions. This can be sent to Andrew Middlecote to arrange and pay for. County Cllr Hale will check with highways as to how best this can be paid for. It may be possible that the Council would pay for 50% of this project.

207. AONB Grants for kissing gates.

Cllr Drinkall had talked with locals on the prospect of replacing styles with kissing gates. PROW Officer Jeff Wheeler has said that the footpath budget at the County Council will not cover this. Instead, the AONB may be able to provide funding. Landowners would approach the AONB to investigate their own funding.

The Clerk will place an ad in the Parish Magazine and on the parish website to make people aware of the scheme, with the option to either contact the Clerk or follow the specific link.

219.2 Pavement weed spraying.

The question was raised as to what the County council's policy was in dealing with weed growth on the public pavements. The usual method of using weed spray has recently been voted down by the County Council due to health concerns over the chemicals used. The only two remaining options for the lengthsman are cutting or burning. County Cllr Hale suggested that the Parish wait until the new policy has been finalised. After this, the Council was unanimous that it would be happy to have the new method applied here.

County Cllr Hale suggested that a new foam method could be tested on the Parish pavements if the Parish volunteered for this. Councillors were very happy for this to happen.

219.4 Lorries travelling to Stowfield Industrial site.

Cllr Hale reported that the environment department at GCC had received complaints about the industrial site. Various emails had been sent to the site owners and an inspection of the site had been made. A reply concerning all of these actions was still being awaited. The Clerk will chase these up.

249. Highways matters.

The flooding on Junction Hill had been traced to a spring emanating from a nearby field. The issue is, whose responsibility is it to prevent the flooding that this water causes. It is assumed, however, that it is the responsibility of the landowner. This excess water may have previously been removed down the drain, although, if the drains remain blocked then this would cause flooding problems. County Cllr Hale would look into this.

250. Wild Boar.

The Clerk reported that the information on how to report the sighting of a dead wild boar had been put up on the website. The division remains between boar found on the road after 4 pm, being the responsibility of the Highways department and those found away from the road, being the responsibility of the Forestry England.

262. Payments.

The council was confident, that having reviewed its meeting times, over the current year, it had had nine meetings, two of which were in the bar. This means that the council currently is in credit for one booking. It is also suspected that the Village Hall will have a new fee schedule for the new year. The Clerk would confirm and enquire on these matters respectively.

277. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council.

The presence of the scrambling bikes at Dryslade Farm had caused considerable noise complaints. Cllr Drinkall stated that she had received three complaints on this matter. Cllr Bowen has also received noise complaints. The origin of the problem was seen to be a lack of prior notice for the event. Cllr Gwilliam was asked to use the local noticeboards as a means of giving notice of the future events. The chair suggested that all complaints on this be sent to the Clerk.

283. Report of the County Council.

County Councillor Terry Hale gave his report. Much of this was given in item 4. However, new information included, that the Build Back Better fund would soon become defunct. Cllr Hale shared the concerns over the complaints made on the disruption from the sudden local road closures.

The sign problems at Symonds Yat were likely also being exacerbated by out-of-date or incorrect SatNav data.

The issue of the refill of the local salt bins was raised. A report on the condition of the local bins would need to be compiled for the Clerk. This would then be passed on to the County Councillor. The Councillors agreed that they would report back on this, regarding their own locality.

284. Report of the District Councillor.

None.

285. Planning Matters.

P1486/23/TCA The Rectory, English Bicknor,

Trimming trees overhanging neighbouring properties.

The Council reviewed the application and resolved to support it.

A review of the Council's planning procedure was then had. The pertinent questions had been, whether meetings should be arranged to allow Parishioners to attend and whether the Clerk should be present. The replies from the GAPTC had been that the minimum quorate was all that was required for a planning meeting and that the Clerk should ideally be present. After discussion Councillors agreed that the format will be that if a planning application arrives and cannot be included in the items of a standing meeting, firstly the District Council would be asked for an extension to the comment date, and if this was not granted then a new public meeting will be convened with the standard times for advertisement and display of agenda. These being a minimum of three days' notice and a quorate of at least three councillors. These extra meetings will incur an increased expenditure on the hall rent budget.

286. Accounts of Payment.

Mr Jonathan Martin – clerk's wages, office allowance and expenses - £418.68

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

Resolved.

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

The Chairman read out a report citing the relative parish precept burden of other Parish councils in the District. In comparison to the rest of the area the Parish tax burden in English Bicknor is much lower, however, this is likely a reflection of major urban town councils lifting the average.

The pertinent question is how the council wishes to expand its operations and how the budget should enable this. It was believed that a sudden rise in the Parish's precept would be better than a slow series of incremental increases over several years. The increase is also needed to begin the regeneration of the council's reserves, which have been depleted by this year's election expense.

A significant increase of the precept was determined to enable the council to undertake the projects, such as an increased contingency budget, to be used, for example, funding the speed camera. The increase of the website management fees will also be covered by this increase, as well as a 5% increase to the Clerk's wages.

It was Resolved to increase the precept to £8,000.00 for 2024-25, this being an increase of £3750.00, representing a 88% increase.

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

Questions were raised as to whether the baseplate of the flagpole was damaged, however, the presumption was that it was still functional. In conversations with the Forestry England, it was reported that they would like the flagpole repaired, however, it was asked, how they would reduce the continued risk of yet another act of vandalism on it. A meeting with Darren Edwards is also to be held on the matter.

It was resolved that the Clerk will make the insurance claim, now that repair quotes have been collected.

289. Highway Matters

See above.

It was reported that the problems with the drains on chapel hill still needed to be chased up. The sign at the entrance to English Bicknor had also not been repaired. This would also need following up on.

274. Footpaths in the Parish.

The issues reported to the PROW Officer regarding REB24/1 and REB14/1 are still outstanding.

See above.

275. Wildlife in the Parish.

The Chairman reported on the substance of a meeting held at Speech house by the Forestry Commission. Its topic was the management of a potential outbreak of African Swine flu and the various contingencies.

290. Correspondence received since last meeting.

Two Rivers had reportedly not been cutting grass outside of 1 Murrells road. The Clerk would email them to encourage this. Also, the resident stated that the pavement outside of this property is in need of attention, it is thought to be the responsibility of County Highways.

291. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council.

The summary paragraph in the Parish Magazine detailing the Parish meeting was discussed and should be reinstated.

Date of Next Meeting 6th February 2024.

End. 10:06.