

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 4 June 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
Councillor Mr P. Warden
County Councillor Mr T. Hale.

322. Apologies and welcome.

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

323. Public Forum.

There were no members of the public present.

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

Proposed Cllr Gwilliam.

Seconded Cllr Braithwaite.

Resolved.

325. 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 VAT issue.

The Chair reiterated the previous request from the Village Hall Committee that the Parish Council buy play equipment for the Village Hall. The prior decision to an identical request made in 2022, which the Council declined, was also restated. The Chair read the advice obtained from GAPTC on the first request, stating that the scheme would be unlawful as tax evasion. A new email from GAPTC regarding the more recent request also confirms the previous advice for 2024.

An alternative funding source was proposed by County Councillor Hale, in that the Village Hall could apply for Build Back Better grant monies. The amount that the Village Hall would need would be around £1,400. However, Cllr Gwilliam stressed that this amount would only be the first part of a more extensive renewal program for the playing area. There are other grant schemes available for these later down the line. County Cllr Hale was thanked for his assistance in this.

The Chair asked for a conclusive agreement on this item, as it had been on the agenda for the two previous meetings. The agreement that the Parish Council would not assist the Village

Hall in this was unanimous. Instead, the Village Hall could pursue the Build Back Better grant option, as Cllr Hale was happy to help with this.

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

The emails requesting a meeting had been sent, though meetings have yet to occur. However, despite the delays, this meeting is likely to happen.

186.1 Warning sign on the footbridge at Symonds Yat Rock.

The Chair reported that from further research on the matter, the previous sign had been paid for by the local police. They contributed £50 to the sign, and the item was insured by the Parish Council for £200. It was suggested that the police should be asked again to offer funds for the sign's replacement, as it is in their best interest to prevent lorries from becoming stuck. The Clerk would write to them and suggest this. This letter should also be copied into Forestry England and Andrew Middlecote at the Highways Department. It was also proposed that the sign's realistic price limit should be around £400.

951.3 Community speed watch Camera.

Cllr Braithwaite reported that he was just about to send the information collected by the Camera to the police. However, the recent destruction of the Camera on the night of May 17-18th has postponed this. The Clerk has filed a police report, and Mr Dave Holland of the community speed watch liaison team has asked for a replacement if possible. An insurance claim will also have to be made to fund this. When this replacement camera is received, Cllr Braithwaite suggested installing it on a higher post. Andrew Middlecote at Highways will be asked to provide a higher post.

The Chair asked if any of the data gathered by the Camera had been delivered yet. Cllr Braithwaite stated that the information is now defunct due to time limits. It was discussed whether this incident might motivate the police to install a real police camera. The police had previously promised one hour of traffic enforcement in the Parish. This had yet to be confirmed. It is hoped this item can be brought up at the police, crime and road safety group action meeting in September, which Cllr Braithwaite will attend.

84.5 Red House Lane.

The Clerk reported that this organisation or the MP's office had not replied to the attempt to update the Sat-Nav.

The Chair suggested that the Clerk correspond with Mr Brian Watkins of County Highways, who had resolved a similar problem. The Clerk will attempt this new tactic.

The Clerk will contact Andrew Middlecote to remind him of his previous pledges to clear the mud at the lower part of Red House land.

219.2 Pavement weed spraying.

Cllr Hale reported that a new scraping method of removing weeds tested in Cheltenham is working and will likely be implemented throughout the rest of the County. Confirmation of this would be deferred to the next meeting.

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

The Chair summarised the situation and Cllr Gwilliam reported that the quote details had been given to the Clerk. The Council had settled on the fibreglass option at around £923.99 from the Hampshire Flag Company. This is based on the quote dated 26/02/24. Installing the Flagpole would likely require the work of local volunteers, perhaps from Forestry England. Cllr Gwilliam will speak to his contacts at Hampshire Flag Company to arrange transport and a storage location.

249. Highways matters.

The Clerk will ask Andrew Middlecote when the English Bicknor sign outside Dryslade Farm will be replacement.

321. Parish Council Website issues.

The question was raised about how the old website will be shut down and how information will be transferred to the new one. The Clerk will ask our website manager to attend the next Parish Council meeting to explain how this will be accomplished and a general update on the new website.

321. (Continued) Replacement of the English Bicknor Post Box.

This problem has been going on for six months now. All information comes from various informal sources. The Clerk has attempted to communicate with the post office via several formal channels but has received no response.

Reports state that the post office proposes placing the post box on the opposite side of the road and therefore requires a services survey before a new Post Box can be added. This is because someone does not want the box replaced in the original position. The Chair reported that she had contacted the field owner and adjacent property owner and neither had had any dealings with the Post Office over this. The Chair also reported that as far as she could tell the current metal post and plate had not been damaged, therefore there seemed no reason why the post box should not be replaced in its former location.

The Clerk will write again to the post office, this time delivering a letter to the Coleford collections office and copying our MP, County and District Councillors.

326. Report of the County Councillor.

County Councillor Hale reported on local issues, starting with the new sinkhole formation along Redhouse Lane. Forestry England is looking into it, and a camera will need to be sent down into it to ascertain how deep it is. The Cave Rescue service is also interested in exploring the sinkhole to discover if it is part of or linked to a more extensive cave system. Highways has also recently been made aware of the site.

Regarding the County Council, the contractors named Publica have been thanked as their contract has ended. There is continued debate at the County Council regarding the right to strike and whether his adoption can be forced.

Road safety in the County was addressed, with 1465 road deaths reported for the year. £200,000 had been added to the budget to further improve safety, especially around schools, including Bicknor's primary school.

Cllr Hale informed the Council that resurfacing work in Lydbrook is scheduled for 10 July. This work will ensure traffic and delays in English Bicknor from road diversions. It is expected to last at least ten days.

A further £950,000 had also been invested in other various target schemes.

327. Report of the District Councillor.

None.

328. Planning Matters.

P0400/24/FUL

Bicknor Cottage, Ross Road, English Bicknor, Coleford.

Replacement of two existing bell tents with two new portable holiday cabins

In summary, the Council Could not support the application as the development may not be in keeping with the local aesthetic. It is also large and will contribute to the burden on amenities by being connected to them. The cabins do not appear to be portable, as they will be connected to services and therefore will be permanent additions to the estate. Lastly, the tents that the application states are to be replaced by this did not have planning permission as they were not permanent fixtures.

329. 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

Community First Insurance renewal – 237.28

GAPTC subscription £110.73

Community Heartbeat £162.00

The Clerk gave a summary of the recent financial report.

The Clerk will transfer £500 into the saving accounts from the current account, as part of the reserves regeneration prescribed in the budget.

Proposed: Cllr Braithwaite.

Seconded: Cllr Warden.

The payments were resolved.

330. Highway Matters.

The road at Eastbach still needs resurfacing, with potholes near the scrapyard being particularly bad. The Clerk the will contact Andrew Middlecote at Gloucestershire Highways.

331. Footpaths in the Parish.

None.

332. Wildlife and Pest Matters.

None.

333. Correspondence received since the last meeting.

Cllr Gunther's resignation as Chairman on 30th April 2024, has now been formally confirmed via a written email that has been archived.

A letter from Mrs Margarate Datta regarding recent flooding on her property was read out. It was agreed that this was not a council matter as it pertained exclusively to an issue on private land between two private persons. The Clerk will send a written response to the parishioner explaining this.

The Clerk informed the Council of a recently received letter from the District Council detailing the request for input and comments on the new local plan. This will be added to the next agenda.

334. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council.

1. The Clerk has contacted Andrew Middlecote regarding the Sinkhole which has appeared in Redhouse Land, and the Sinkhole has been cordoned off.
2. Cllr Gwilliam asked that the Parish Council's funding of grass-cutting on the playing fields be reviewed. Cllr Braithwaite suggested that to address this the Parish Council would need further information relating to costings and the plan for the maintenance of the field going forward.
3. The Chair referred to the annual Parish assembly where Cllr Braithwaite and Cllr Warden offered to review the Risk assessments and submit them to the next meeting.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 6 August.

The meeting ended at 9:11 pm.