

English Bicknor Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 1st of October 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 D. Gunter
Councillor Mr H. Cole
Member of the public Mrs D Gwilliam

350. Apologies and welcome.

Welcome was given. Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Warden.

351. Public Forum.

The previously resolved matter of the parish council's proposed purchase of the playground equipment was brought up again by Mrs D Gwilliam. It was reiterated that the matter had been concluded, with the Council observing the advice of the GAPTC (Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils), that the scheme constituted tax evasion and should not be attempted. The Clerk was instructed not to pursue any aspect of this matter without the permission of the Parish Council.

Member of the public left the meeting at 7:07 pm.

It was confirmed that the Village Hall Committee had now purchased the play equipment using funds from the 'Build Back Better' scheme. This had been recommended to them earlier in the year by the Parish Council and County Councillor Hale assisted in the application process. Cllr Braithwaite also mentioned that VAT is not money lost or wasted because it goes back into the public finances, from which the Council's Precept and the grant mentioned above are funded.

To close the matter, the June resolution was confirmed.

Cllr Gwilliam stated that the Village Hall Committee was still pursuing further funding from other grant schemes.

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

Proposed Cllr K Braithwaite

Seconded Cllr H Cole

Resolved. Minutes signed by Chairman.

334. Review and update of the Parish Council's risk assessment.

A minor amendment to the previous assessment was made, but nothing substantial has been altered. The Clerk had been forwarded these documents for the files.

Proposed: Cllr. K. Braithwaite.

Seconded: Cllr A. Bowen.

It was resolved that the new risk assessment be adopted.

336. Parish Council website.

The Clerk reported that the new Parish Council website is up and running without problems or complaints and now hosts the Village Hall and Saint Mary's Church. The Parish Council's one-third contribution to the yearly hosting fee will be paid to Mr Andrewes. Mr Andrewes was thanked for his work and continued efforts as website manager.

337. Replacement of the local postbox.

It was reported that a new postbox had been installed on the small green by the entrance to Smithy Close. Despite numerous attempts at communicating with the post office on this replacement, the Council has yet to receive a notification. News of this, along with the location of the new post box, will be included in the November issue of the ParishC Magazine.

337. A. Weeds and Hedge overgrowth in the Village.

Cllr Gunter reported that the hedge opposite Cowmeadow farm had been cut back. Hedges cannot generally be cut until after September 1st; however, a road safety exception exists if needed before this date. Highways had undertaken its cutting but at a later than usual date.

337. B. Bus shelter.

The Bus shelter remains uncleaned. However, the Council would be grateful if the volunteers still wished to complete this task. The Clerk has checked the Council's insurance policy to ensure that the volunteers are covered by it and will inform Mrs Shelbourn.

186.1 Warning sign on the footbridge at Symonds Yat Rock.

The Clerk reported that no reply from the Police Commissioner had been received in the request for minor payment contributions to the signs. This request would be reattempted for a definitive answer from them. It was also confirmed that Forestry England had responded that although they supported the idea of the new sign(s), they would not be able to offer funding for these.

The Clerk would approach Andrew Middlecote at Gloucestershire Highways, for his office to produce the sign out of their budget. Conjoined with this, Cllr Cole would approach Forestry England again to see if they could create the sign out of their suppliers for a discounted price that the Parish Council would cover.

Cllr Braithwaite reported that the road safety meeting he attended as a Council representative on September 18th had been a success. The issue of the lorries becoming stuck at Symonds Yat Rock was raised, together with the Parish Council's attempts to reinstate a sign on the footbridge above the road. He had received positive feedback from the representatives of

Forestry England and County Highways. Disappointingly, no police representative was present. Cllr Braithwaite was thanked for this.

951.3 Community speed watch camera.

There was nothing new to report. The options for claiming insurance on this had been exhausted, primarily as the Council has incurred no material loss. The question of whether the Council wishes to fund a new camera at around £600 was mentioned. This was deferred. The Clerk will again ask Andrew Middlecote if his office can fund the replacement of a higher pole on which the VAS camera can be installed.

84.5 Red House Lane.

Enquiries of Mr Brian Watkins of County Highways into how the SatNav instructions can be changed have yet to be replied to. The Clerk will continue these efforts. Mr Middlecote will be advised of the persistent mud buildup on the road again.

219.2 Pavement weed spraying.

This was addressed in the public forum of the August meeting. However, it was agreed that scraping remains Parish's best option. The Clerk will ask Mr Middlecote to initiate this.

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

Cllr Gwilliam reported that the flagpole has been delivered, but illness has delayed its installation. He stated that the base plate still needs to be constructed and installed, and Mr Paul Griffiths will do this at a cost to the Council of around £100.

249. Highway Matters.

The missing sign for the Village still needs to be replaced. The Clerk will chase this up.

330. Potholes Eastbach Road.

It was reported that the potholes on this road had been partially repaired, but more work remained to be done.

352. Report of the County Councillor.

None.

353. Report of the District Councillor.

None.

354. Planning Matters.

No planning applications were received.

355. Financial report and accounts for payment:

Confirm Grant to English Bicknor Village Hall for grass cutting of the playing fields 2024-25 - £450.00

English Bicknor Village Hall, hall hire 1/11/23-30/09/24 - £125.00

Mr S. Andrewes. Tripart payment for yearly website subscription - £201.60/3 = £67.20

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

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

Total: £ 1,060.88

Proposed: Cllr H Cole.

Seconded: Cllr D Gunter.

Resolved.

The financial report was given with no pressing issues stated.

Cllr Gwilliam said that he did not think the Mowing grant for the playing fields had been paid last year. The Clerk will look into this.

356. Highway Matters

The sinkhole in Redhouse Lane remains present, though it has been cordoned off. The repair is still contingent on the completion of various geological surveys. Cllr Gwilliam reported that the first survey of the sinkhole had discovered more extensive caves connected to it, adding to the complexity of the repairs. The Cavers are still liaising with Gloucestershire Highways, and Cllr Gwilliam will continue to keep in contact with these parties.

357. Footpaths in the Parish

None.

358. Wildlife and pest matters

Cllr Gwilliam reported that Forestry England had bought land near Edge End. This 130-acre parcel will be used to create a new forested area. However, this area may become a haven for wild boar pests. It is possible, though, that this land might be fenced off. The Council may have to draft a formal complaint for this possible boar problem.

359. Correspondence received since last meeting

None.

360. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council.

Cllr Cole stated that he had relocated to Cinderford. However, this does not affect his role as a Parish Councilor as he continues to work in the Parish. The Council records would be updated to accommodate this.

Cllr Drinkall reported that the wooden display board needs attention and the laminated sign sign at the Lime Kilns needed to be replaced due to weathering. This should be done as soon as possible due to the risk of liability. Cllr Cole may be able to create a laminated sign, and Cllr Gwilliam will ask a local person to repair the display board pro bono.

361. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday the 3rd of December.

The meeting ended at 8:07 pm.

