

## ENGLISH BICKNOR PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held Monday 11th May 2009

**Present:** Cllr P. Scott (Chairman), Cllr J. Carrick, Cllr Mrs S. Holden, Cllr Mrs D. Owen, Cllr S. Dartnell

Also present: County Cllr Mr B. Evans, District Cllr Mrs M. Smart, Mrs B. Britton, Mr B. Livingston, Mrs S. Livingston, Mr Harold Capsey, Mrs Dallas Capsey, Mr Phil Gwilliam, PCSO Nick Jones, Mr Robin Fyffe, Mrs Kate Fyffe, Mrs Helen Rodwell, Mr Brian Carne, Mrs Miriam Roberts, Mrs Ann Dartnell

**Apologies:** Cllr Mrs P. Stott, Cllr Mrs P. Drinkall, Mr B. Drinkall

**Minutes:** The minutes of the last Parish Assembly were circulated, confirmed and signed by the chairman after being proposed by Cllr P Scott, seconded by Cllr J. Carrick.

**Chairman's Report:** The chairman thanked both County Councillor Bill Evans and District Councillor Mrs Marilyn Smart for their continued support and attendance at meetings.

The Parish Council received a grant of £3,500.00 from Overlooking the Wye, which with matched funding of £1,000.00 from our footpath account meant that seven new kissing gates have been purchased for installation on the Heritage Trail and Coldwell Walks. To date 6 of these kissing gates have been installed. This still leaves £1,5000 in the footpath account for improvements to footpaths within the Parish. The Parish Council had taken the decision not to give charitable donations during the financial year 2009-2010 as this would have meant increasing the precept to cover these donations. Thanks were extended to the Police Community Support Officers, PCSO Nick Jones and PCSO Ben Jeffries for their support and help within the Parish. The chairman also thanked his fellow Councillors for their contribution to the successful running of the Council.

#### **Matters arising from the last Annual Assembly and the Chairman's Report**

Mrs Barbara Britton asked if the precept had included an amount for flag pole maintenance. After some discussion it was agreed that no maintenance is required at present, but this is something to be considered in future when setting the budget.

**County Councillor's Report:** County Cllr Bill Evans outlined the problems he has dealt with in West Dean over the previous year. These included supporting residents opposing the introduction of a service charge by Two Rivers Housing Agency; supporting the vulnerable and elderly, which has included working with Central Electric to provide winter warm packs to this group; working with many Parish Councils, including English Bicknor Parish Council, on highway matters, including flooding, signage at Symonds Yat, drainage and potholes. Cllr Evans has also dealt with many individual residents' problems throughout the year.

**District Councillor's Report:** Cllr Marilyn Smart reported that during the year she had dealt with issues ranging from planning, ambulance response times, opposition to allotments at Joyford, housing, flooding, anti-social behaviour, unacceptable noise levels, vandalism to tombstones and highways issues. Alcohol Free Zones have been introduced in Lydney and the other towns are hoping to follow suit. With the police they have provided drug advice to schools and colleges and concentrated on safer driving for

young people.

Significant improvements have been made in the planning department following discussions involving the community on how the service could be bettered. The council also had to cope with a budget deficit of £1.1 million, resulting in many difficult decisions to establish priorities. In October all staff will be brought into the main council building. A task group has looked at and responded to the Severn Barrage project, and the issue of wild boar in the Forest.

Much time has been spent in trying to achieve improvements to the way the Council operates. The council needs to support more facilities for young people. There is a need for better transport and for cycle paths between villages and towns.

On 27th June the Council will be presenting the Freedom of the District to 1st Battalion Rifles, who are based at Beachley, following their recent return from a tour of duty in Afghanistan. The Council is proud of the Battalion and wishes to thank them for their courage, professionalism and the service they give to our country.

Cllr Smart concluded by thanking the Chairman and the Parish Council for their good wishes during her recent illness and the very warm welcome she always receives at meetings.

**Police Representative's Report:** PCSO Nick Jones reported that there had been 14 crimes reported to the police in the Parish in the last year. These included 9 thefts, 1 burglary, 2 assaults and 2 in the possession of cannabis. Five speeding tickets were issued to motorists on Ross Road, English Bicknor, during March 2009. Speed checks will be carried out in Hillersland in the near future due to concerns raised by local residents. PCSO Nick Jones also informed the meeting of the priorities for the community team, including speeding in certain areas and drug mis-use in car park toilets.

**Report on the work of the Lucy Machen Charity:** The report and annual accounts were presented by Mr Phil Gwilliam. Among the main disbursements made during the year was one to the school to provide transport, and large donations to both Lydcare and to the church.

Cllr P. Scott proposed a vote of thanks to Mrs Barbara Britton for her work as clerk to the Charity.

**Report on the work of the English Bicknor Parochial Charities (Charity of George Wyrhall):** The report and annual statement were presented by Mrs Barbara Britton who reported that the Trustees had met twice during the year and had made 23 donations, totalling £1,150.00, to those considered to be in need in the Ancient Parish of English Bicknor.

During 2008 Mrs Suzanne Garlick had decided not to stand for re-election as Parish Council Representative Trustee after 12 years in this position. Mrs Kathleen Shuster had also decided to retire owing to failing health after 15 years as Lydbrook Parish Council Representative Trustee. Mrs Britton thanked them both on behalf of the Charity for their unfailing support. Cllr Jeff Carrick and Mr Colin Gibbons have taken on these positions.

**School Governors' Report:** Mrs Helen Rodwell, Chair of the Board of Governors at English Bicknor C of E School, reported on a busy year dominated by concerns for the future, given the considerable drop in numbers. At present there are 40 pupils on roll, a drop of 14 since last year. The Governors and staff are involved in making prudent

cuts to the budget in line with a reduced income, but have resisted reducing classes to only two, as it is not felt this would be in the best interests of either the children or the future of the school. On a brighter note, the school role should increase by 2 in September.

A Parent and Toddler group, averaging 10 to 12 children, meet once a week in the school hall. After three years of discussions and objections, the school has finally been able to submit a planning application to the council for a prefabricated building to use for pre-school provision. The facility will provide pre-school provision for 10 children and will also provide both a breakfast club and after school care. It is hoped that the facility will be ready in September. A generous donation has financed the purchase of the building and grants are being sought to furnish the interior. Two ladies are interested in running the Bicknor Bears as a business, overseen by an advisory committee comprising representatives from church, school, nursery and community. Finally, Mrs Rodwell thanked the Head and his staff for providing a quality education and all round experience for the children, despite concerns for the future and a restricted budget.

**Report of the Village Hall/Social Club:** Mr Peter Scott reported on the finances of both the Hall and the Club. Both continued to make a small profit, although the Club had used reserves to finance the recent updates of its furnishings and floor. The Hall will be closed from the 18th May until the middle of September for the improvement works, funded by a Lottery grant.

**Report of the Castle Bailey Glebe Land Committee:** Mr Peter Scott reported on the decision not to try to extend the car park area. The hedge is to be laid this autumn and the school are planning to construct an outdoor classroom near their boundary, subject to planning consent.

**Report of the Friends of St. Mary's:** Mr Steve Dartnell reported that the Friends continue to raise funds to support the following projects in the church. A folder about the church building has been published. An Amenity room on the ground floor of the tower with toilet, sink and refreshment area has proved a great asset. The Royal Arms has been away for restoration and conservation. New rainwater soakaways to the north side of the church have been installed.

The recent Quinquennial report highlighted a number of areas of work, which have been prioritised. The Friends are looking to install an Air to Air heat pump heating system to reduce the carbon footprint.

Thanks were extended to Brian Carne and everyone on the committee for their help with fund-raising activities.

**Report of English Bicknor & District Gardening Club:** Mr Steve Dartnell presented the report on behalf of Mr Brian Drinkall, who gave his apologies for not being present himself. The Gardening Club has continued to flourish over the last 12 months. Members have enjoyed a varied programme of talks and visits to local gardens; once again we are grateful to programme secretary, Pat Drinkall, for her hard work. Perhaps the highlight of the year was a rare opportunity for a guided tour around the private gardens attached to Hereford Cathedral. Membership holds steady at just under 50 and new faces are always welcome. Meetings and visits take place on the last Tuesday of the month.

**Report of the English Bicknor Women's Institute:** Mrs Ann Dartnell reported on another busy year, with numbers increasing to 42. Visitors and speakers have been

varied, including life as a shepherd, experiences of an undertaker, guide dogs, local poets. Many outings, particularly to the theatre, have been enjoyed. Members have taken part in walks, quizzes, skittle matches and meetings with other local WIs. Last August there was an exchange visit from Ironbridge WI, with their husbands. The WI ran a stall at the Hospice fete and collected shoeboxes for the Christmas appeal.

**Any other matters affecting the Parish:** It was suggested that perhaps someone could be employed to run the bar at the Social club, as to date the Club has relied on just one person to run the bar. An increase in prices at functions could fund the cost of paying someone.

The Chairman thanked Ann Dartnell and the WI for providing the refreshments at the end of the meeting.